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“To what extent is there a silence in regards to the  
issue of abortion within the contemporary  
evangelical church in the UK?”

A Thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Theology

by

Matthew Cliff

Middlesex University

Supervised at the London School of Theology

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## **Abstract**

In 2016, then chief executive, Cathy Warwick attempted to sign the Royal College of Midwives to a campaign orchestrated by The British Pregnancy Advisory Service, the largest abortion provider in the UK. The aim of the campaign was to decriminalise abortion. This campaign received significant backlash from a proportion of the midwives, making it headline news. Among other concerns, decriminalisation would effectively terminate the regulatory framework surrounding abortion. This would include the 24 week limit, allowing for abortions to take place right up until birth. In light of the developments with regards to the pro-abortion agenda, one may ask “what, if any, is the response of the evangelical church?” Therefore, the aim of this thesis seeks to answer the question “To what extent is there a silence in regards to the issue of abortion within the contemporary evangelical church in the UK?”. Whilst drawing from an extensive review of historical, theological and ethical literature, the final chapter contains a unique empirical research endeavour demonstrating how one evangelical organisation, namely the Evangelical Alliance, has engaged with the issue of abortion. The goal of this final chapter is to offer a verifiable indicator as to *if* and *why* a silence may exist more broadly in UK evangelicalism. Ultimately the findings from this thesis revealed that the issue of abortion is not a top priority for contemporary evangelical leaders in the UK, this despite previous calls for the issue to be at the very top of their agenda. As demonstrated in the research, reasons for this apathy vary. However, one potential root cause is an unfamiliarity with a robust evangelical theological method. Therefore, this thesis offers a recommendation for evangelical leaders and churches to start discussing evangelical theological method as a precursor to the discussion of abortion.

## **Acknowledgements**

Throughout this whole research journey God's grace, His provision and His providence have been clearly evident. His grace in first drawing me to himself and transforming me to be able to even undertake such a task. His provision through the members of my local church – Chenies Baptist, of which I now am privileged to minister full time. I am indebted to these people eternally for their prayers, their massive contribution to the financial costs and their patience until my completion. Also, His providence by which I had the surprising privilege of being allowed access to the Evangelical Alliance in order to carry out the empirical part of my research. To the EA, I say thank you.

I want to also thank my supervisors Dr. Olwyn Mark and Dr. Graham MacFarlane. Olwyn, may the Lord bless you and your ministry. Your encouragement, patience, time and wisdom were invaluable and I wouldn't have arrived at this point without it. Also, Graham, thank for all your encouragement and your comments on the thesis itself.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the millions of unborn children that have lost their lives by the means of abortion. My prayer, as ambitious as it may be, is that this thesis would spark discussion amongst evangelicals in the UK in spite of whether or not you agree with my conclusions.

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# **Introduction**

## **1. Prologue**

The origins for the following thesis began on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016. On this date, whilst standing in line at a Waitrose supermarket, my attention was drawn to a front-page newspaper headline that read, 'MIDWIVES REVOLT OVER ABORTION'. Further reading revealed the subheading, which claimed, 'Fury as their feminist union chief backs bid to axe ANY time limit on terminations'.<sup>1</sup> Upon purchase and further investigation I discovered that the article was written in response to a decision made by Cathy Warwick, then chief executive of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM). Warwick simultaneously held the position of Chairman of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), the country's largest abortion provider. The 'revolt' was in relation to Warwick's decision, without first consulting the midwives, to sign the RCM up to a BPAS campaign that was seeking to decriminalise abortion. Being struck by the horror of the prospect that 'decriminalisation' could have on the fate of countless unborn children, as a self-professed UK evangelical Christian, the first question I asked myself was, "Where is the church?" and then, more specifically, "Where and who is the evangelical voice in the UK speaking on this issue?"

So then, armed with an elementary understanding of the issue itself and a somewhat weak affirmation that abortion was 'wrong', I sought to discover if and then why there appeared to be a silence from evangelical churches in the UK on the issue of abortion. Therefore, the resulting thesis is an attempt to answer the following question: "To what extent is there a silence in regard to the issue of abortion within the contemporary evangelical church in the UK?"

In 2016, according to figures released by the *World Health Organization*, the leading cause in the top 10 global causes of death was ischaemic heart disease and stroke, with a combined total of 15.2 million worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Abortion wasn't acknowledged as a cause of death. However, a report published on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2018 by the independent medical journal *The Lancet*, entitled 'Abortion: access and safety worldwide', revealed that '44% of the world's annual 227 million pregnancies are unintended, of which 56% end in abortion'.<sup>3</sup> This means, according to the report, that just over 50 million abortions take place annually worldwide. Therefore, *if* abortion were to be recognised as a cause of death, it

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<sup>1</sup> Greenhill, S and Spencer, B. (2016). 'Midwives Revolt Over Abortion', *Daily Mail*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016, 1, 4.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, 'The top 10 causes of death,' *World Health Organization* website (<https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death>; accessed January 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The Lancet, 'Abortion: access and safety worldwide,' *The Lancet* website ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)30624-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)30624-X/fulltext); accessed January 2019).

would be more than 3 times that of ischaemic heart disease and stroke put together and the leading cause of death in the world today. Likewise, abortion isn't only an international issue; it is also a UK issue, *The Department of Health and Social Care* revealed that in 2017 it completed 197,533 abortions in England and Wales, the highest amount since 2008.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, I believe this thesis is both timely and critical. It is my attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of UK evangelicalism's engagement with the issue from a historical, a theoretical and an empirical standpoint.

## **2. Map of thesis**

Fixed between an introduction and conclusion, the thesis is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, before heading straight into the topic itself, the foundational aspects of the thesis are provided. This entails a definition of the term 'evangelical' and a historical narrative of evangelicalism in the UK, before arriving at an examination of contemporary evangelicalism in the UK (21<sup>st</sup> century onwards). This provides context for the whole of the resulting thesis.

With the foundation laid down in chapter 1, chapter 2 aims to provide more context, specifically considering UK evangelicalism's engagement in social reform. Abortion is a social issue; therefore, before discovering a potential contemporary UK evangelical perspective on the issue, it is vital to first analyse how the movement has historically engaged in social reform

Having identified where contemporary evangelicalism stands concerning the issue, the next two chapters focus on *why* these positions may exist. Chapter 3 seeks to examine the perspective of a UK evangelical leader who has spoken on the issue of abortion and thereby attempts to identify indications as to if and why there may exist a silence within the movement itself.

Finally, what is lacking within the discussion surrounding abortion is verifiable statistics concerning UK evangelicals. A pitfall of this means the discussion may be in danger of relying too heavily upon theoretical speculation. Therefore, chapter 4 provides unique empirical research concerning abortion and the evangelical church in the UK through the lens of the Evangelical Alliance in the UK.

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<sup>4</sup> The Department of Health and Social Care, 'Abortion Statistics, England and Wales:2017,' The Gov website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2017>; accessed January 2019).

# **Chapter 1. Evangelicalism in the UK: The historical narrative**

## **Introduction**

The goal of this thesis is seeking to answer the following question: “To what extent is there a silence in regards to the issue of abortion within the contemporary evangelical church in the UK?” Owing to the broadening diversity of UK evangelicalism itself, in order to arrive at a comprehensive evaluation of the extent of this silence, it is imperative to first define what is exactly meant by the phrase ‘contemporary evangelical church in the UK’. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the complexity and diversity of definitions of evangelicalism and also to provide a foundational understanding of evangelicalism within the UK from both its historical and contemporary context.

## **1. Defining UK evangelicalism**

### **A. The challenge**

Defining evangelicalism is a challenging task. Alistair McGrath agrees that ‘it is notoriously difficult to give a precise definition of evangelicalism’,<sup>5</sup> and Stanley E. Porter adds that ‘it appears to be getting more difficult all the time’!<sup>6</sup> There are numerous reasons for this difficulty, some more prominent than others. One reason is that evangelicalism not being its own ecclesiastical institution or denomination, therefore, it lacks one singular creed to which evangelicals can adhere, as Graham MacFarlane notes:

There is no one identifying confession ... Thus, with no common consensus to which the movement as a whole can appeal, it has never arrived at one mind on its key beliefs in any articulated and consensual manner. Nor is there any one spokesperson or group who may speak with singular authority on behalf of Evangelicals as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

Evangelicalism can be described as a theological movement that, as McGrath highlights, embraces ‘a complex network of individuals, seminaries, parachurch organizations, and journals, each with a distinctive “take” on what constitutes the essence of evangelical identity’.<sup>8</sup> Historically, the movement

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<sup>5</sup> McGrath, Alistair, *Evangelicalism and the future of Christianity*, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995, 53.

<sup>6</sup> Porter, Stanley E. & Steven M. Studebaker, ‘Method in Systematic Theology: An Introduction’, in Stanley E. Porter and Steve M. Studebaker (eds), *Evangelical Theological Method: Five Views*, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2018, 2.

<sup>7</sup> McFarlane, Graham, ‘4. God, Self and Society: Variations on a Trinitarian Theme,’ in David Hilborn (eds), *Movement for change: Evangelical Perspectives on Social Transformation*, Bucks: Paternoster, 2004, 56-69, 56.

<sup>8</sup> McGrath, Alistair, ‘1. Evangelical Theological Method: The State of the Art’, in John G. Stackhouse Jr (eds), *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000, 15-37, 26.



has transcended denominational boundaries.<sup>9</sup> D.W. Bebbington acknowledges metaphorically that evangelicalism 'is a wine that has been poured into many bottles'.<sup>10</sup>

There are some advantages to the lack of any specific creed to which appeal can be made – namely, less rigidity allows for more flexibility. There are also some challenges, the main challenge being exactly who has the authority to speak and safeguard the movement, meaning that the title 'evangelical' is always at risk of being hijacked by organisations and individuals who don't necessarily embody its historic values and principles. For example, Dave Landrum, Director of Advocacy at the Evangelical Alliance, highlights that 'there is clearly an agenda by some who self-evident as evangelicals but could more accurately be described as liberal protestants seeking to lay claim to the word "evangelical"'.<sup>11</sup> That said, however, he adds that surrendering the name should not be an option: 'the evangelical label has great value, and the good news it conveys is worth fighting for'.<sup>12</sup> In summary, evangelicalism has a certain elasticity which has allowed the movement to stretch its boundaries wider and wider. However, ironically, the movement's greatest strength could also be its greatest weakness, as this elasticity is always at risk of reaching a breaking point.

## **B. Two Key Attempts to Define Evangelicalism**

In spite of the complexity, one can still find many attempts to define evangelicalism. Rather than the movement finding an exact definition, MacFarlane notes that 'evangelical identity and belief has comprised something more akin to a constellation of core values'.<sup>13</sup> Two key attempts to highlight these core values amongst evangelicals are those by John G. Stackhouse Jr and D.W. Bebbington.

### *i) John G. Stackhouse Jr*

Canadian John G. Stackhouse Jr identifies five core values:

1. Evangelicals believe and champion the gospel of God's work of salvation particularly as it focused in the person of Jesus Christ.
2. Evangelicals believe and champion the Bible as the uniquely authoritative rendition of God's Word in words to us.
3. Evangelicals believe and champion conversion as the correct way to describe God's work of salvation in each Christian and as a reality to be experienced, not merely affirmed.

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<sup>9</sup> Thorsen, Don, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, & Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology*, Lexington: Emeth Press, 2005, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Bebbington, D.W, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s*, Oxon: Routledge, 1989, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Landrum, Dave, 'Concluding remarks: A cause for hope,' in Greg Smith (eds), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015, 183-191, 184.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 183.

<sup>13</sup> MacFarlane, 'God, Self and Society,' 56.

4. Evangelicals believe and champion mission as the chief goal of the Christian life on earth.

5. Evangelicals believe and champion these four elements of generic Christian tradition in ways that other traditions do not ... There is nothing peculiarly evangelical in any of these four convictions. But evangelicals place special emphasis on this constellation of four and do so in such a way as to relativize every other conviction.<sup>14</sup>

J.I. Packer, commenting on Stackhouse's criteria, agrees with his distinction that 'these emphases mark mainstream Christianity across the board, more or less'.<sup>15</sup> However, Packer adds that 'all evangelicals could claim is that they maintain them more insistently and consistently than do others'.<sup>16</sup>

ii) D.W. Bebbington

D.W. Bebbington, in 1989, released his book *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s*. With the omission of the 'special emphasis', Bebbington lists four very similar key values or characteristics of evangelicalism in the UK throughout the centuries:

1. Conversionism – The belief that lives need to be changed.
2. Activism – The expression of the gospel in effort.
3. Biblicism – A particular regard for the Bible.
4. Crucicentrism – A stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.<sup>17</sup>

These characteristics have become known as the 'Bebbington quadrilateral'. Derek Tidball suggests that this quadrilateral, relating to the identity of evangelicalism in the UK, would establish itself 'as near to a consensus as we might ever expect to reach'.<sup>18</sup>

In summary, Stackhouse and Bebbington offer two very similar recognitions of the core values of evangelicalism. Over the subsequent years there appears to have been little to suggest that these core values have changed or developed. In their 2018 publication, *Evangelical Theological Method: Five Views*, Stanley Porter and Steven M. Studebaker maintain that:

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<sup>14</sup> Stackhouse Jr., John G., '2. Evangelical Theology Should Be Evangelical', in John G. Stackhouse, Jr (eds), *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000, 39-58, 41-42.

<sup>15</sup> Packer, J.I., '7. Maintaining Evangelical Theology', in John G. Stackhouse, Jr (eds), *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000, 181-189. 183.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Tidball, Derek J., *Who Are The Evangelicals: Tracing The Roots Of Today's Movements*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1994. 14

‘although diverse in many respects, evangelicals share an emphasis in their theology and spirituality on the Bible, a reconciled relationship with God based on Jesus Christ’s atoning work on the cross, personal conversion and dynamic spiritual formation facilitated by the Holy Spirit, and service and ministry to others’.<sup>19</sup>

## **2. Evangelicalism: Historical Analysis**

Before evaluating the current contemporary landscape of evangelicalism, in the following section we turn first to a historical overview of evangelicalism within the UK in order to highlight the movement’s impact on and influence upon the UK church in particular and society in general.

Although John Stott claims that ‘evangelical Christianity is original, apostolic, New Testament Christianity’,<sup>20</sup> generally evangelicalism is identified as being mainly evident within ‘three constellations of thought’:<sup>21</sup> ‘The Reformation Period’, ‘The Evangelical Revival’ and ‘Modern Conservative Evangelicalism’.<sup>22</sup> It is through the lens of these ‘three constellations’ that the overview of UK evangelicalism will be undertaken.

### **A. The Reformation Period – 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Century**

Prior to the European Reformation period, in general, rather than larger groups, there were certain individuals who epitomised the evangelical identity. For example, John Wycliffe, who passed away in 1384, was famously labelled the ‘morning star’ of the Reformation and had the alias ‘*doctor evangelicus*’.<sup>23</sup> In 1532, Lord Chancellor of England and now venerated Saint of the Roman Catholic Church, Thomas More, in writing distinguished himself from the reformer and Bible translator William Tyndale by naming Tyndale and ‘his *evangelical* brother Barnes’.<sup>24</sup> Whilst indicating that More himself did not associate with the term ‘evangelical’, it also identified the movement as separate from the Roman Catholic church. Also, although not based in the UK but worth a notable mention, in Germany, reformer Martin Luther was horrified that his followers were using his surname as a distinguishing marker and began to make much use of the term ‘evangelical’ as a distinctive marker.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Porter, ‘Method’, 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Stott, John, *Evangelical Truth: A personal plea for unity, integrity and faithfulness*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Thorsen, *Wesleyan*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Conant, H.C., *The English Bible: History of the Translation of the Holy Scriptures Into the English Tongue*, Nashville: Graves, Marks & Rutland, 1856. 214.

<sup>25</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 11.

## B. The Evangelical Revival – 18<sup>th</sup> Century

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, British society, Tidball notes, was a 'cruel place in which to live, with plenty of scope for immorality'.<sup>26</sup> Religious fervour was absent, and this is the soil from which the 'Evangelical Revival' bore fruit. This evangelical revival first began in Wales in 1735, when Howell Harris, a schoolmaster in Brecon, was converted. This transformation was soon followed by the conversion of Daniel Rowlands, a curate in Carmarthenshire.<sup>27</sup> Both men, Bebbington writes, began travelling around Wales preaching the evangelical message 'that salvation can be known now'.<sup>28</sup> England soon followed. On 24<sup>th</sup> May 1738, John Wesley, who would go on to become instrumental in the revival of evangelicalism throughout the whole of Great Britain, experienced his heart 'strangely warmed'.<sup>29</sup> Wesley recognised that this experiential event was pivotal in his evangelical conversion. During the years 1735–1738, John's brother Charles was converted, as was George Whitefield. These three men would lead and champion the evangelical movement first throughout the whole of the England<sup>30</sup> and then on to other parts of the world. Scotland was next. In 1741, Whitefield preached and revival broke out, first in Cambuslang on the outskirts of Glasgow.<sup>31</sup> In Great Britain, evangelicalism was becoming an unstoppable *tour de force*.

The label 'Methodist' would soon be used to distinguish the likes of Wesley and Whitefield and more generally those impacted by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century evangelical awakening.<sup>32</sup> These 'methodists' would eventually form the Methodist Church, which would separate from the Anglican Communion, in spite of Wesley's original intention that they remain.<sup>33</sup> However, many affected by the evangelical revival did opt to stay within the Anglican Communion, including persons such as clergyman Charles Simeon who, according to Tidball, was responsible 'for securing the loyalty of many of the Church of England that might otherwise have strayed to nonconformity'.<sup>34</sup> Anglicans John Newton and William Cowper likewise furthered the evangelical cause and, as Tidball points out, the likes of Newton, Cowper and Charles Wesley 'must have been responsible for spreading more evangelical doctrine through their hymns than preaching ever did'.<sup>35</sup> Overall, the evangelical movement from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>28</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 32.

<sup>30</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 20-21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>32</sup> Wood, A.S., 'Methodism,' in Sinclair Ferguson, David F. Wright & J.I. Packer(eds), *New Dictionary Of Theology*, Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998, 426-427. 426.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>34</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

was not exclusive to any one denomination,<sup>36</sup> but rather could be characterised by a distinct approach to the gospel and the Christian life,<sup>37</sup> allowing evangelicalism in the UK to be truly trans-denominational.

### C. Evangelicalism Established – 19<sup>th</sup> Century

J. Wesley Bready, in his 1939 book *England: Before and After Wesley*, writes that the 'Evangelical Revival [in the 18<sup>th</sup> century] did more to transfigure the moral character of the general populace than any other movement British history can record'.<sup>38</sup> As a result, evangelicals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had no fear of being met with suspicion like those of the previous century. Rather, says Bebbington, they 'set the tone of British society'<sup>39</sup> and 'expected their views to be heard'.<sup>40</sup> The movement not only affected individuals on a personal level but also 'exerted an immense influence both on individuals and on the course of social and political development'.<sup>41</sup> Although circumstances may have changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this type of historical reflection, provided by Bebbington, could provide a key insight as to how contemporary evangelicals could understand their own identity and place within society today.

That said, owing to the rise of the social acceptance of evangelicalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more and more evangelicals were prepared to come out of their trenches, as it were, and engage wider society.

R.W. Dale confirms:

[the evangelical] is not a man who spends his nights and days in fasting and prayer but a man who is a zealous Sunday School teacher, holds mission services among the poor and attends innumerable committee meetings. Work has taken its place side by side with prayer ...<sup>42</sup>

This characteristic of activism would become a distinguishing factor of evangelicalism. A group that epitomised this characteristic most effectively, throughout 19<sup>th</sup>-century Great Britain, was the Clapham Sect. This 'sect' was a group of friends, all members of the Church of England, who not only shared a passion for all the evangelical tenets but were also characterised by their desire for

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<sup>36</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Bready, Wesley J., *England: Before and After Wesley: The Evangelical Revival and Social Reform*, London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1939. 327.

<sup>39</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, ix.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 276.

<sup>42</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 43.

evangelical activism.<sup>43</sup> Notably, William Wilberforce was a driving force behind the group and in time would become its most famous member.<sup>44</sup>

#### **D. Evangelicalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

##### *i) Stagnation*

The 20<sup>th</sup> century marked another turning point within the evangelical movement. Bebbington writes that, 'the hundred years or so before the First World War...deserve to be called the Evangelical century'.<sup>45</sup> Owing to the success of evangelicalism's social saturation, it appears to have achieved its goal of affecting and 'improving' nearly every aspect of society. As a result, the revolutionary emphasis of the movement somewhat stagnated. The overall impression during this period is that evangelical churches increasingly began to act on an assumption that the evangelical position was a presupposed societal norm, with the result that much of the focus switched from external expansion to internal consolidation. As a result, rather than concentrating on evangelism, differences over doctrine became a central concern for the movement.<sup>46</sup> Tidball writes that 'the story of evangelicalism in the twentieth century is one of growing strength, accompanied by growing fragmentation'.<sup>47</sup> Evangelicalism became distracted from within whilst the wider society drifted towards increasing secularisation. This drift towards secularism would later have a massive effect on the decline of church membership and attendance, which had been falling since the 1920s.<sup>48</sup>

The two World Wars were also hugely detrimental for the church generally in the UK. Rather than seizing the opportunity to promote peace, the church 'became somewhat introverted and indifferent'.<sup>49</sup> In particular, owing to the sheer scale of the war and the fear it caused, evangelical activity somewhat slowed. In the wake of World War II, the 1960s saw a catastrophic collapse of church membership in the UK. By 1979, adult church attendance had dropped to 11% of the English population, to 13% of the Welsh population by 1982 and to 17% of the Scottish population by 1984.<sup>50</sup> Religion was increasingly marginal among the wider population, and, as Bebbington writes, 'it was hard to disguise the shrinking of Christianity and its influence'.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Tomkins, Stephen, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's Circle Transformed Britain*, Oxford: Lion, 2010. 11.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 149.

<sup>46</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 48.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 250.

<sup>49</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 48.

<sup>50</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 250

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 251.

ii) *Evangelical 'Revival'*

A further study would be required to assess whether British society was on the verge of returning to its 18<sup>th</sup>-century moral landscape, and such studies would be rather hypothetical. However, it would be fair to comment that a 'revival', like that of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was needed once again in order to inject the nation with evangelical fervour. In the 1950s, the re-emergence of evangelical crusades, not unlike those of Whitefield and Wesley, animated the church once again. However, instead of filling fields, like Wesley and Whitefield had, evangelists Tom Rees and American Billy Graham filled halls and stadiums.<sup>52</sup> Also, in 1950, Anglican evangelical John Stott became the rector of the evangelical flagship All Soul's Langham Place, London. Tidball astutely remarks that 'much of the revival of evangelicalism can be traced to his influence'.<sup>53</sup> In addition to Stott, other significant London appointments were made: Welshman Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones (who became pastor of Westminster Chapel in 1943) and Dick Lucas (who became rector of St Helen's Bishopsgate in 1963). Through their expository preaching, books, recordings and other initiatives, they heralded the evangelical cause in the heart of the capital. This was to have further influence in that a re-emergence of evangelical passion during this period resulted in the establishment of evangelical scholarship, with foundations being laid with the establishing of London Bible College in 1943 and Tyndale House, Cambridge, in 1944.<sup>54</sup>

In summary, throughout certain periods, UK evangelicalism experienced both growth and decline, favour and opposition. However, in spite of the changing tide from the church and society at large, on the whole, the movement reacted by remaining true to its core characteristics as demonstrated in Bebbington's quadrilateral. Concerning 21<sup>st</sup>-century UK evangelicalism, history is in the process of being written.

### **3. Contemporary Evangelicalism in the UK – A 21<sup>st</sup> century Snapshot**

Following the historical analysis which reflected on three significant periods in the history of UK. evangelicalism, the aim of the following section is to provide a snapshot of the landscape of contemporary evangelicalism in the UK from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a means of analysing

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<sup>52</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 50.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

the movement so far, two specific research subjects have been identified: the 2005 English Church Census and a research initiative entitled *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals* by the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>55</sup>

### **A. Contemporary Evangelicalism: English Church Census**

The first crucial statistical research data of interest is the English Church Census. This research was carried out on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2005 by the research group Christian Research. Although the statistics may appear somewhat outdated, it appears these are still the only statistics available that demonstrate the number of evangelicals within UK churches at the time. Therefore these figures offer a verifiable indication as to the scale of the movement at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The research was undertaken solely in English churches, and 18,720 churches in total participated. This research discovered that, of the 50,309,000 people living in England at the time, 3,166,200 people attended churches on a Sunday.<sup>56</sup> This was 6.3% of the total population. When comparing these figures with the 1998 English Church Census, there is a notable 15% decrease in church attendance: 3,714,700 people attended churches in 1998.<sup>57</sup>

This research was also able to discover the theological affiliation of those attending churches on a Sunday morning. This is the statistic that is of relevance to our study, as 40% of the churchgoers identified themselves as 'evangelical'. The percentage gap was significant compared to that of the next affiliation in the list, where 27% of participants identified themselves as 'Catholic'. This term is not to be confused exclusively with 'Roman Catholic'. The description 'Catholic' was also used by 72,000 Anglicans, 3,000 Methodists and 1,000 independent churchgoers.<sup>58</sup> In comparison with the number of evangelical churchgoers in the 1989 and 1998 censuses, the percentage of evangelical churchgoers had increased significantly from 30% in 1989 and 37% in 1998 to 40% in 2005.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, although the overall attendance of English churchgoers decreased, there was a steady increase for those who identify themselves as evangelical.

The research also split the affiliation 'evangelical' into a further three sub-categories: 1. broad evangelical (those who ticked both 'broad' and 'evangelical'); 2. mainstream evangelical (those who

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<sup>55</sup> Evangelical Alliance, *21st Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015 & Peter Brierley, *Pulling Out Of The Nose Dive: A contemporary picture of churchgoing: what the 2005 English Church Census Reveals*, London: Christian Research, 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'English Church Census 2005,' *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, 20th March 2008, (<http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/good-news-for-the-poor.cfm>; accessed February 2017).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Brierley, *pulling*, 51.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



just ticked 'evangelical'); and 3. charismatic evangelical (those who ticked 'charismatic' and 'evangelical').<sup>60</sup> The results were as follows:

- Broad evangelical – 6%
- Mainstream evangelical – 18%
- Charismatic evangelical – 16%.<sup>61</sup>

Those who identify as 'charismatic evangelical' have seen a steady increase (13% in 1989 and 14% in 1998). However, 'mainstream evangelical' has gone from 8% in 1989 to the highest percentage, at 18% in 2005. This dramatic upturn was first seen in the 1998 census when the percentage rose to 17%.<sup>62</sup>

Denominationally, evangelicalism has significant influence among Pentecostals (95% describing themselves as evangelical), Baptists (88%), independent churches (84%) and 'new' churches (84%). The gap is significant in comparison to Anglicans (34%), United Reformed Church (21%), Methodists (18%) and Roman Catholics (4%).<sup>63</sup>

The research highlights that, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, evangelicalism as a movement demonstrated growth. Brierley predicts that this growth 'is likely to continue to do so for the immediate decade ahead'.<sup>64</sup> One possible cause for concern may be that this growth is seen in denominations that don't generally have a united and centralised locality in comparison to those of the Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches. For example, Derek Tidball wrote of evangelicalism in 1994 that 'today evangelicalism is probably stronger than ever. But it is a coalition of groups, rather than a united monolith'.<sup>65</sup> This trend appears to have been carried into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This lack of single authority presents difficulties and challenges in working towards consensus perspectives relating to doctrinal and social justice issues. A lack of unity could restrict the influence of evangelical principles, not just within the church itself but also in UK society as a whole.

## **B. Contemporary Evangelicalism in the UK: Through the lens of the Evangelical Alliance**

The 2005 English Church Census demonstrated that, at the turn of the century, evangelicalism was experiencing steady growth. The following section will analyse contemporary evangelicalism through

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>63</sup> Evangelical, 'English.'

<sup>64</sup> Brierley, *pulling*, 65.

<sup>65</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 48.

the lens of the Evangelical Alliance (EA). The EA claims to be the largest and oldest evangelical unity movement in the UK today,<sup>66</sup> representing 2 million evangelical Christians in the UK.<sup>67</sup> According to its website, this representation is nationwide and includes '81 denominations, 4,000 churches, 600 organisations and thousands of individual members'.<sup>68</sup> Its website also acknowledges its historical influence: 'for more than 165 years, we have been bringing Christians together and helping them listen to, and be heard by, the government, media and society'.<sup>69</sup> Finally, it is also the founding member of The World Evangelical Alliance, an organisation that brings together more than 600 million evangelical Christians worldwide.<sup>70</sup> Therefore the EA represents a credible, holistic and verifiable organisation as a lens through which to analyse in more depth contemporary evangelicalism throughout the UK.

#### *i) 21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals Research*

In 2010, the EA conducted a landmark research initiative with the aim, as General Director Steve Clifford notes, 'to produce a snapshot of the beliefs and practices of evangelical Christians in the UK'.<sup>71</sup> The results of this research were offered to churches and Christian organisations to help them better understand the beliefs and habits of evangelicals in the UK. The hope was that it would enable the recipients to become more effective within the communities in which they operate.<sup>72</sup> According to some, this objective was successful. John Glass, General Superintendent of Elim Pentecostal Churches and Evangelical Alliance Chair of Council, remarked:

'once again, through precise analysis and helpful insight, the Evangelical Alliance has provided us with a reliable lens through which we can better understand the context in which we seek to serve – and so enabling us to focus with clarity on issues we should prioritise.'<sup>73</sup>

More than 17,000 people from England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, who are in some way connected with evangelical churches and networks, took part in the research. They completed questionnaires on many different topics, including beliefs, religious practices, political opinions, moral questions and involvement in social issues.<sup>74</sup> From the overall figure, more than 12,500 identified and

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<sup>67</sup> Smith, Greg, 'Introduction: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals Research Programme,' in Greg Smith (eds), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015, 13-16. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Evangelical, 'History,'

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Clifford, Steve, 'Foreword,' in Greg Smith (eds), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015, 11-12. 11.

<sup>72</sup> Evangelical, 'History.'

<sup>73</sup> Clifford, 'Foreword', 11.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, 'Introduction', 13-14.

defined themselves as evangelical.<sup>75</sup> The research was gathered at festivals chosen because of their popularity amongst evangelical Christians (Spring Harvest, New Wine and Keswick).<sup>76</sup> The research was also conducted randomly at 35 EA member churches.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, ensuring that the research was of an acceptable and credible standard, an academic advisory group, including some leading social scientists specialising in the religion of Britain, were brought in to officiate.<sup>78</sup> Since the publication of the research, further surveys have been carried out on more specific topics, such as communication, money, church life, the family, discipleship, evangelism, politics and poverty.<sup>79</sup>

ii) *Expert Observations on the Research*

The results of the research will be analysed in more depth in the following section. However, it may be helpful to provide some summary comments from UK evangelical leaders who engaged with the research. Stephen Holmes noted that, in spite of the hijacking of the title for political or commercial purposes, 'UK evangelicals [still] fit well within the standard definitions of evangelical identity'.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, Clifford is optimistic, and acknowledges that although the research highlights 'numerous issues that the Church needs to address with some urgency',<sup>81</sup> on the whole, 'evangelical Christianity in the UK remains vibrant and engaged both counterculturally and incarnationally'.<sup>82</sup>

With regard to the future of evangelicalism in the UK, although the evangelical characteristics remain similar to that of classic evangelicalism, the research demonstrates that the demographic has changed quite considerably. Smith notes that 'most of the new congregations founded in recent decades, and most of the ministries that have proved to be effective among younger people, are charismatic or Pentecostal in style and evangelical in belief'.<sup>83</sup> Time will judge whether these ecclesiological movements will further strengthen or dilute evangelical identity.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>76</sup> Evangelical Alliance, '21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals,' *Evangelical Alliance UK*. website, (11 January 2011, <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/21st-century-evangelicals.cfm>).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, 'Introduction', 15.

<sup>79</sup> Evangelical, 'History.'

<sup>80</sup> Holmes, Stephen R., 'Chapter 1: Evangelical theology and identity,' in Greg Smith (eds), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015, 23-36. 34.

<sup>81</sup> Clifford, 'Foreword', 12.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>83</sup> Smith, Greg, 'Preamble: Who are the evangelicals? A demographic portrait,' in Greg Smith (eds), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015, 17-22. 18.

### iii) Major Influences

Before analysing contemporary evangelicalism and social engagement, in which the issue of abortion sits, one final area of interest generally demonstrated in the research concerns the 'gatekeepers' of evangelicalism in the UK. The research revealed the 10 most influential public figures impacting UK evangelicalism. These figures will become of interest further on in the thesis in identifying a well-known UK evangelical conversation partner on abortion.

Two British theologians, John Stott (15%) and Tom Wright (10%), led the list.<sup>84</sup> In total there were four British-born figures on the list (John Stott, Tom Wright, Jeff Lucas (6%, although based in the US) and C.S. Lewis (4%)), two of whom are now deceased. The rest of the list included figures born in the United States (Phillip Yancey (8%), John Piper (5%), Bill Johnson (4%), John Ortberg (4%), Billy Graham (4%) and Bill Hybels (3%)). All of the US figures are still alive today, demonstrating that US evangelicalism is significantly impacting UK evangelicalism.<sup>85</sup> This research also indicates a potential gender imbalance within contemporary UK evangelicalism, with no women being mentioned in the top 10.

### conclusion

To conclude, whilst not attempting to provide a comprehensive understanding of UK evangelicalism, this chapter has aimed to provide a context for the ensuing discussion. The chapter opened by revealing the difficulty that generally arises with attempting to define evangelicalism, the main obstacle being that the movement lacks any singular creed to which its proponents can adhere. However, as demonstrated, John Stackhouse and D.W. Bebbington offer two similar analyses, which helpfully clarify the 'core values' of the movement, demonstrated by those who have either claimed or been appointed the title 'evangelical'. The historical analysis of evangelicalism in the UK sought to track the movement's ebbing influence throughout the centuries, before arriving at an evaluation of contemporary evangelicalism in the UK. Although the 2005 English Church Census provided some insightful data regarding evangelicalism at the turn of the century, especially the steady growth it had experienced, it was the EA's *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals* research initiative that proved to be an invaluable resource, not only for this chapter but throughout the rest of the thesis. This research conducted by the EA will provide much of the basis for analysing the remaining of contemporary evangelicalism in the UK and its engagement with the issue of abortion.

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<sup>84</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'Time for discipleship?', *Evangelical Alliance UK*. website, (13 April 2014, <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/time-for-discipleship.cfm>).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Chapter 2. Evangelicalism in the UK: A Vehicle for Social Reform**

### **Introduction**

The aim of the following chapter is to analyse how evangelicalism in the UK has been used as a vehicle for social reform. This is crucial for the overall thesis, as the topic of abortion is a social issue. First there will be an analysis of the movement's engagement, both historically and contemporarily, in order to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the movement's engagement overall. The section will end with at an assessment of contemporary UK evangelicalism's engagement with abortion in comparison to other social issues as seen through the lens of the EA's *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals* research.

### **1. Historical Evangelical Social Reform**

Historically, one of evangelicalism's most notable strengths has been its engagement with social reform.<sup>86</sup> Behind every social reform cause, generally, there is an objective to be achieved. Amongst evangelicals, the objectives have been demonstrated in two main areas:

1. Places where there has been a clear obstacle to the evangelical message (the gospel). For instance, anything that prevented human beings from hearing the gospel was perceived as a threat to their salvation. For evangelicals, such things became the focus of major concern.<sup>87</sup>
2. Places where there has been a clear violation of justice according to biblical principles. As soon as evangelicals became aware of injustice, they felt responsible for attacking it.<sup>88</sup>

These two main objectives were the foundations upon which evangelicals engaged with society. A major critique against the evangelical position was that their reforms were often, as Bebbington comments, for an 'elimination of what was wrong, not for the achievement of some alternate goal'.<sup>89</sup> Their rhetoric was geared towards being 'anti-x'. For example, they were 'anti-slavery' or 'anti-contagious diseases'.<sup>90</sup> Throughout the history of their campaigns, Barclay writes, evangelicals often wanted a 'totally Christian solution'.<sup>91</sup> However, nuances to the 'anti-x' method were also evident – for example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, certain evangelicals who were engaged with social action, such as

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<sup>86</sup> Edwards, Joel, 'The Evangelical Alliance: A National Phenomenon,' in Steve Brady & Harold Rowdon (eds), *For such a time as this: Perspectives on evangelicalism, past, present and future*, London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996, 49-59. 58.

<sup>87</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 133.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Barclay, *Evangelicalism*, 108.

William Wilberforce and Lord Shaftesbury, would often build on small progresses.<sup>92</sup> To the indignation of their evangelical contemporaries, these social reformers were prepared to cooperate with people and groups who did not share their evangelical beliefs.<sup>93</sup> Wilberforce, who understood politics, was willing to settle with small progresses which would eventually lead to majorative political victories. This is seen especially in the campaign to end slavery:<sup>94</sup> it took them 20 years to achieve. Slavery was finally abolished in Britain in 1807, and slavery itself was then abolished in 1833.<sup>95</sup>

Campaigning is a hallmark of evangelical activism and praxis. Bebbington writes that evangelical campaigns 'were essentially protest movements'.<sup>96</sup> Protesting against suffering and injustice, although a real concern, was not the primary motivation. Evangelicals were intent on not being labelled as just another humanitarian voice. Humanitarian causes alone 'did not prod their consciences'.<sup>97</sup> For the evangelical, 'sin once identified, must not be tolerated';<sup>98</sup> therefore, attacking sin was at the forefront of many of the campaigns.<sup>99</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lecturer George Stephen found that, when campaigning against slavery, it became more effective to brand it as 'criminal against God'.<sup>100</sup> Although other non-evangelical individuals and groups played their part in social reform, as Heasman writes, in the Victorian era 'there were societies of all sorts and descriptions to meet a widespread variety of needs'.<sup>101</sup> However, Tidball notes that evangelicalism during the 19<sup>th</sup> century spawned 'an army of evangelistic campaigns and associations'.<sup>102</sup> This analysis will become more insightful to the overall thesis when reviewing if contemporary UK evangelicalism has strayed from its activist roots and therefore to the detriment of its engagement with the issue of abortion.

## **2. The Great Reversal**

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, a shift hit evangelicalism in the UK. Tidball observes that this meant that a proportion of evangelicals betrayed 'their heritage and withdrew from any real, meaningful social reform'.<sup>103</sup> Over time, it would become known as the 'great reversal'. This 'great

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 179.

<sup>94</sup> Barclay, *Evangelicalism*, 108.

<sup>95</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 37.

<sup>96</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 180.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Heasman, Kathleen, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal Of Their Social Work In The Victorian Era*, London: Geoffrey Bles Ltd, 1962. 285.

<sup>102</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 13.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 188.

reversal', Vencer writes, 'led to a militant separatism and indifference to social issues'.<sup>104</sup> In summary, four significant factors, or maybe a combination of some or all, could be responsible for the reversal:

- A) The emergence of the 'social gospel'.
- B) The influence of differing eschatological persuasions.
- C) War time disillusionment.
- D) Evolving cultural norms

#### **A. The Emergence of the 'Social Gospel'**

The 'social gospel' was birthed out of evangelicalism.<sup>105</sup> Stott remarks that 'for fifty years (1920–70) rather than pushing for social reform, evangelicals were preoccupied' with defending themselves from within.<sup>106</sup> The 'social gospel' was favoured the more liberally minded protestants, who were adamant that to change the individual you must first transform their environment.<sup>107</sup> Initially, the 'social gospel' was an evangelistic strategy for reaching the working classes.<sup>108</sup> 'Sin', Bebbington suggests, for the social gospel advocates 'was diagnosed in social structures, which therefore must be remodelled'.<sup>109</sup> Conservative evangelicals, on the other hand, believed an individual's problem was, primarily, not found outside themselves but within.

The strategy of the social gospel advocates sparked a major reaction from the conservatives. Their attitude to reforming society, in contrast to the opposite view, began with a desire to transform the individual. Therefore, conversion was seen as something of a shortcut to social reform.<sup>110</sup> All their efforts were directed into individual evangelism rather than social reform.<sup>111</sup> The conservatives believed that the liberals had turned from following the true evangelical gospel, which prioritised the need for conversion, and instead had begun to follow a pseudo-gospel.<sup>112</sup> They believed, ultimately, that liberals, as Bebbington writes, treated 'conversion as superfluous'.<sup>113</sup> This, for conservative evangelicals, to avoid being identified as 'liberal', was the beginning of 'the tendency to withdrawal'

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<sup>104</sup> Vencer, Jun, 'The World Evangelical Fellowship: Facing The Future,' in Steve Brady & Harold Rowdon (eds), *For such a time as this: Perspectives on evangelicalism, past, present and future*, London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996, 60-65. 62.

<sup>105</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 211.

<sup>106</sup> Stott, John, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, Hants: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1984. xi.

<sup>107</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 211.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 212.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 216.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 216.

from social issues.<sup>114</sup> However, as Vencer notes, 'evangelical social concern pre-dated that of liberalism',<sup>115</sup> and therefore should not be considered as an exclusively liberal matter.

## **B. The Influence of Differing Eschatological Persuasions**

Differing views on eschatology amongst evangelicals, likewise, had extreme social ramifications. Evangelicals persuaded by postmillennialism expected Christian values to be realised on earth before Christ's return. Therefore, a 'Christianised' society was a motivation for attitudes favourable towards social reform. On the other hand, premillennialists, as Bebbington asserts, sought 'a king not a kingdom'.<sup>116</sup> They did not care so much for a reform of the society they inhabited because they believed it would have to be this way in order for Christ to return. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, premillennialism was a governing eschatological viewpoint held by most conservative Anglican evangelicals, which may indicate why there was such a leaning towards social reform inactivity.

## **C. Wartime disillusionment**

Two dramatic events would occur during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that would have ramifications on the whole world, evangelicalism included. With the First and Second World Wars came, as Tiball considers, 'a sense of defeatism'.<sup>117</sup> There was a drift towards pessimism regarding social engagement, as 'evangelicals adopted a more hopeless stance towards the world'.<sup>118</sup> This also fostered an attitude of general disillusionment with politics amongst evangelicals,<sup>119</sup> which added to the slumber of passion for social reform.

## **D. Evolving 'Cultural Norms'**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as church attendance dwindled, so did the impact of Christian values and influence. Bebbington remarks that, in 1944, 'the Education Act decreed that religious instruction and a daily act of worship should be compulsory practice in state schools'.<sup>120</sup> However, by the 1970s, both were unobserved.<sup>121</sup> Technological advances such as the radio, the television and the automobile severely affected Sunday school attendance.<sup>122</sup> This meant that the youth of the day, rather than becoming embedded in evangelical tenets, were exposed to the prevailing zeitgeist. In addition,

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 214.

<sup>115</sup> Vencer, 'World,' 62.

<sup>116</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 216.

<sup>117</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 186.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

<sup>119</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 215.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 250.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*.



throughout the 1960s a dramatic shift in sexual ethics occurred. In 1967, ‘crimes’ such as homosexual practice and abortion were abolished.<sup>123</sup> Bebbington concludes that ‘it was hard to disguise the shrinking of Christianity and its influence’.<sup>124</sup> Besetting confusion and wrestling between a Christian and a secular worldview would appear to see evangelicalism retreat into the shadows. In summary, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, owing to the factors stated above, evangelicalism was affected by what can aptly be entitled a ‘social engagement paralysis’. Evangelicalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was a force for social and political transformation. Evangelicals were vigorous in pushing for reform in many different institutional structures, such as the slave trade, prisons and education.<sup>125</sup> Wilberforce and Shaftesbury demonstrated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that a person could be a committed evangelical and care in an active way for the poor and oppressed.<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately, as Barclay admits, the 20<sup>th</sup> century evangelical was ‘doing much less than our theologically less sophisticated nineteenth-century forebears did.’<sup>127</sup> An over-reaction against the social gospel, Catherwood holds, led ‘many evangelicals [to] become suspicious of social involvement’.<sup>128</sup> In his opinion, ‘in rightly rejecting a liberal-social Gospel and a hyper-spiritual radical asceticism they [conservatives] have neglected their clear Biblical duty to be God’s salt and light in society’.<sup>129</sup> John Stott similarly says that, ‘because of our reaction against the “social gospel” of liberal optimism’, evangelicals ‘have tended to divorce evangelism from social concern, and to concentrate almost exclusively on the former’.<sup>130</sup>

Although it may be somewhat theoretical to acknowledge exactly how these factors may or may not have affected the issue of abortion for evangelicals, what this section demonstrates is that they most certainly had an effect on how evangelicalism engaged other social issues more broadly. Therefore, one could suggest that the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century evangelicalism’s ‘social engagement paralysis’, especially within the 1960’s, when the abortion act was passed, was not an ideal foundation for engaging social issues of any kind, never mind abortion.

### **33. Turning Point and Renewed Engagement**

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 251.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>125</sup> Barclay, Oliver, *Evangelicalism In Britain 1935-1995: a personal sketch*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997. 111.

<sup>126</sup> Catherwood, Christopher, *Five Evangelical Leaders*, London: Hodder And Stoughton, 1984. 43.

<sup>127</sup> Barclay, *Evangelicalism*, 111.

<sup>128</sup> Catherwood, *Five*, 43.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>130</sup> Stott, John, *The Lausanne Covenant, An Exposition and Commentary*, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1975. 15.

Not all evangelicals suffered from this social engagement paralysis. Two major significant turning points took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that once again aimed to prick the evangelical conscience. These came in the form of two conferences. The first came from inside the UK and the other from the outside: the National Evangelical Congress at Keele in 1967, and the International Congress on World Evangelisation at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974.

#### A. The National Evangelical Congress, Keele 1967

The National Evangelical Congress at Keele in 1967, although an exclusively Anglican congress, as Yeats points out, is 'widely recognised as having marked the turning point in Anglican evangelicalism in the twentieth century.'<sup>131</sup> The impact of Keele for Anglicans, with regard to significance, has been compared with the Roman Catholic Second Vatican Council.<sup>132</sup> The general attitude and mood of the congress, according to Stott, 'was one of penitence for past failures and of serious resolve for the future ... It is more a beginning than an end.'

##### i) *Keele Attitude and Statement*

At Keele, Bebbington notes, 'there was a commitment to give serious attention to the problems of society'.<sup>133</sup> Lewis describes that 'it was an important decision of the congress to support evangelical social involvement'.<sup>134</sup> He continues by raising the point that the Keele statement is regarded by 'evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike as 'one of the most important ecclesiastical documents not only of the sixties but of this century'.<sup>135</sup> Within this statement, one of the most important aspects was in relation to social involvement, within which, Bebbington observes, 'evangelism and compassionate service, belong together in the mission of God'.<sup>136</sup> To bridge the divide and the ongoing 'war' between the liberals and conservative evangelicals, John Stott, who was a pivotal figurehead of the conference, emphasised the fact that all the speakers would be considered conservative evangelical. The reason for this was to dispel the illusion that all conservative evangelicals are against social reform.

##### ii) *Effects of Keele*

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<sup>131</sup> Yeats, Charles, *Has Keele Failed?: Reform in Church of England*, London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1995. 7.

<sup>132</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 249.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Lewis, Peter, 'Renewal, Recovery And Growth: 1966 Onwards,' in Steve Brady & Harold Rowdon (eds), *For such a time as this: Perspectives on evangelicalism, past, present and future*, London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996, 178-179. 181.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 249.

Considering the effect of Keele, Bebbington avers that ‘repercussions were felt among all the Evangelicals of Britain’.<sup>137</sup> Out of Keele, notes Gladwin, ‘came a generation of people ... entering into public and political life. From this arose the modern Anglican evangelical movement for social justice.’ He also states that Keele did have ‘many weaknesses’, and not all evangelicals agree since that Keele was a success.<sup>138</sup> However, it did appear to achieve its immediate goal of securing an improved attitude towards social action, as Yeats reflects that ‘having repented of their sectarian attitudes ...many have moved out into an impressive engagement with the wider Church and the world’.<sup>139</sup>

## **B. The First International Congress on World Evangelisation, Lausanne, 1974**

Primarily not a local (British) congress, the First International Congress on World Evangelisation, held in Lausanne in 1974 for evangelicals all across the globe, has been described as ‘a notable milestone’.<sup>140</sup> The Lausanne Congress, which would probably never have happened without the US evangelical statesman Billy Graham,<sup>141</sup> who headed the committee, drew more than 2,300 evangelical leaders from 150 different countries.<sup>142</sup> TIME magazine referred to the Congress as a ‘formidable forum, possibly the widest-ranging meeting of Christians ever held’.<sup>143</sup>

### *i) Lausanne Covenant*

A notable success from the Congress came the drafting of the Lausanne Covenant. The Covenant, according to the Lausanne Movement website, ‘came to be regarded as one of the most significant documents in modern church history; it would bring together evangelicals from diverse backgrounds for missional partnership and shape much of their endeavours for the rest of the century’.<sup>144</sup> The task of drafting the Covenant was headed up by John Stott. Stott, who was also integrally involved with Keele, is described by Barclay as ‘the single greatest influence in the Lausanne Congress’.<sup>145</sup> Catherwood speaks of him having ‘a genius for diplomacy’.<sup>146</sup> This was pivotal in enabling the varied groups to agree on the covenant. It was here that Stott’s paper urged Christians to remember that

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Yeats, *Keele*, 7.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Lewis, ‘Renewal’, 183.

<sup>141</sup> Catherwood, *Five*, 228.

<sup>142</sup> Lausanne Movement, ‘The legacy of the Lausanne Movement,’ *Lausanne Movement* website (14<sup>th</sup> August 2017, <https://www.lausanne.org/our-legacy>).

<sup>143</sup> Stott, *Lausanne*, 3.

<sup>144</sup> Lausanne Movement, ‘About the Movement,’ *Lausanne Movement* website, (2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017, <https://www.lausanne.org/about-the-movement>).

<sup>145</sup> Barclay, *Evangelicalism*, 107.

<sup>146</sup> Catherwood, *Five*, 228.

they were called to both the fulfilment of a great commission (Matt. 28:19-20) and a great commandment (Matt. 22:39).<sup>147</sup>

ii) *Christian Social Responsibility*

‘Lausanne has been seen by Christians from all over the world as a major turning point in the history of the evangelical Church’, according to Catherwood.<sup>148</sup> In one sense, it wasn’t pioneering work that was done, but rather a revival of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century evangelical attitude of combining social concern with the task of proclaiming the gospel.<sup>149</sup> This is evidenced most effectively in the recognition of the covenant itself. Point 5 on the Lausanne Covenant was dedicated to this issue. It states:

Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty.<sup>150</sup>

iii) *The Effects of Lausanne*

Al Tizon maintains that ‘the Lausanne covenant marked a turning point in evangelical thinking’.<sup>151</sup> However, this position was not unchallenged. Some conservatives, Tizon notes, were not convinced, and described the new social vision as ‘being the old “social gospel” in evangelical clothing’.<sup>152</sup> However, Tidball observes that they ‘are a minority voice’.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, overwhelmingly, Lausanne was pivotal in changing the attitudes of British evangelicals concerning social reform.<sup>154</sup> The significance of Lausanne cannot be underestimated. Four years later, in 1978, the High Leigh Conference was noted as being ‘the first national evangelical venture into the field of social ethics to be held in Britain’.<sup>155</sup> David F. Wright notes that ‘it reflected and endorsed the growing acknowledgement among British Evangelicals of the biblical imperatives of social concern and action, to which the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization gave international expression in 1974’.<sup>156</sup> The conference was seen as milestone for UK evangelicalism, as Stott comments, ‘an evangelical

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<sup>147</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 190.

<sup>148</sup> Catherwood, *Five*, 38.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Stott, *Lausanne*, 15.

<sup>151</sup> Tizon, Al, ‘Evangelism and social responsibility: The making of a transformational vision,’ in Lars Dahle, Margunn Serigstad Dahle & Knud Jorgensen (eds), *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, 2014, 170-181. 173.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 191.

<sup>154</sup> Lewis, ‘Renewal’, 183.

<sup>155</sup> Wright, ‘Introduction,’ 8.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

conference on social ethics would have been impossible even ten years ago'.<sup>157</sup> At this conference, the topic of abortion was mentioned, albeit not in depth, but rather in passing reference. An excerpt of Gladwin's talk, later released in the book *Essays in Evangelical Social Ethics*, provides an example of evangelicals grappling with the topic:

'At the heart of this matter is the classic problem of the relationship of freedom and justice...Consider the Abortion debate as an example. If, as some say, the woman is to have the final say over the fate of the foetus bed body and she is carrying the child so that it is an affront to her autonomy for others to have a decisive voice in the matter, how is this position to be matched with the close involvement of others in the problem? Does not the unborn child rights, and does not the father have rights? If one saying 'the woman's rights and another "the child's rights and yet a third 'the father's rights', how is the clash resolved except through struggle and the law trying to an umpire in the middle? This way of understanding the matter is implicitly destructive of mutual love and service, in this case in the small community of the family'.<sup>158</sup>

### C. Conclusion

In conclusion, prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, UK evangelical engagement with social reform ebbed and flowed. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, evangelicalism set a precedent for effective social engagement. However, owing to various factors mentioned above, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century this effectiveness waned. Yet at the end of the century the evangelical social conscience was recovered and renewed, as expressed in two pivotal conferences – Keele and Lausanne – and strong evangelical leadership. Although there was no mention of abortion in the Lausanne Covenant, the ramifications for the initial shift in evangelical conscience towards social reform issues created the means for discussion surrounding a number of differing social issues. At Lausanne II: The International Congress on World Evangelisation in Manila, Philippines, the Manila Manifesto – the second instalment of the Lausanne Covenant – stated, 'the proclamation of God's kingdom necessarily demands the prophetic denunciation of all that is incompatible with it. Among the evils we deplore are ... abortion on demand'.<sup>159</sup>

### **44. Contemporary Evangelicalism in the UK: A Vehicle for Social Reform Through the Lens of the Evangelical Alliance**

In the previous section, UK evangelicalism's historic engagement with social reform was analysed. This is crucial to the thesis overall because the issue of abortion sits within a social reform framework and the factors discussed in the previous section bear weight on its engagement with the issue of abortion.

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<sup>157</sup> Stott, 'Epilogue,' 179.

<sup>158</sup> Gladwin, 'Human,' 165-166.

<sup>159</sup> 'Manilla,'

Within this next section, an analysis of UK evangelicalism's social engagement at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be provided to identify how the discussion surrounding contemporary evangelicalism and social engagement has developed.

### **A. Social Reform and Contemporary Evangelicalism**

Once again, the EA's research *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals* will be used as a lens to analyse contemporary UK evangelicalism's engagement with social reform. The research identified insightful beliefs and trends.

The following section highlights the movement's civic and political activism before demonstrating some more general comments surrounding its engagement with social reform. Civic activism on behalf of contemporary evangelicals in the UK is high: according to the research, more than 80% of evangelicals undertake some form of voluntary service at least once a year. This figure is impressive considering that, within with the general population, in 2007 only 39.2% were involved in some form of volunteering once a year.<sup>160</sup> Therefore, concerning civic activism, the research demonstrates that evangelicals, on the whole, still have significant concern for social reform within the communities in which they live. The following is a selection of statistics that further demonstrate evangelical social involvement:

- 81% of evangelicals undertake some form of voluntary work with their church at least once a year to serve the wider community.<sup>161</sup>
- 37% of evangelicals undertake some form of voluntary work with their church at least once a week.<sup>162</sup>
- 52% of evangelicals volunteer for a Christian organisation at least once a year.<sup>163</sup>
- 21% of evangelicals volunteer for a Christian organisation at least once a week.<sup>164</sup>
- Approximately 32% of evangelicals volunteer for a non-Christian organisation at least once a year.<sup>165</sup>
- 11% of evangelicals volunteer for a non-Christian organisation at least once every week.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Smith, Greg, 'Chapter 3: Evangelicals and social involvement,' in Greg Smith (eds), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015, 57-79. 65.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*.

- 21% of evangelicals have taken part in a local secular community project.<sup>167</sup>
- 24% of evangelicals are trustees of charities compared with 2.2% of the national population.<sup>168</sup>

Relating to political activism, evangelicals are extremely active, or at least seek to be. For example, more than 90% said they would be turning out to vote in the 2011 UK referendum.<sup>169</sup> Many evangelicals are also actively involved within their local elections and trade unions, and many serve as school governors or as trustees of charitable organisations.<sup>170</sup> Also, according to the research, evangelical Christians in areas of both civic and political social engagement are considerably more active than the average Briton.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, as Smith comments, ‘socially engaged evangelicalism is alive and well, and continuing to make a significant impact on the life and welfare of British society in the twenty-first century’.<sup>172</sup> In comparison with the general population, other Christians who don’t identify themselves as evangelical and people from other religious backgrounds, he highlights that evangelicals on the whole:

... are very socially active and politically engaged. They have high levels of social capital in bonding within the local church and in linking between the rich and the poor, which can often mobilise resources for mission and charitable action. They are probably not so strong in terms of bridging social capital or in working in partnership which take them outside the evangelical faith community. They tend to be active citizens, charitably concerned for the welfare of the whole community, and willing to contribute time, skills and energy within their church activities and beyond. These evangelicals certainly cannot be accused of withdrawing from the world but have taken seriously the call to be salt and light wider society.<sup>173</sup>

Admittedly, Smith points out that this social involvement does not necessarily equate to social effectiveness and that ‘further research would be needed to assess how effectively they undertake such tasks’.<sup>174</sup>

Overall, one main reason that evangelicals may be more active in social reform is not necessarily “because that’s what evangelicals do” but because of their high levels of ‘spiritual capital’. In areas such as church attendance, Scripture reading and prayer, where these areas are more engaged, it has

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<sup>167</sup> Evangelical Alliance, ‘Are we good neighbours?’, *Evangelical Alliance UK*. website, (21 August 2014, <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/are-we-communicating.cfm>).

<sup>168</sup> Evangelical Alliance, ‘Does belief touch society?’, *Evangelical Alliance UK*. website, (5 November 2011, <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/does-belief-touch-society.cfm>).

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Smith, ‘Chapter 3’, 57.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

been identified that these are the people who are most likely to be fruitful in social endeavours.<sup>175</sup> Therefore the old adage of 'so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly use' appears to be untrue for 21<sup>st</sup> century evangelicals; in fact, it is those who engage themselves 'heavenly' that are of most 'earthly' use.

However, in spite of all the activity and acknowledgement of the importance of engaging in society, there is still confusion over where exactly it fits into 'the mission' and understanding the 'primary goal of mission'. 36% agree that mission is primarily about bringing justice to the world, 39% disagree and a further 25% are neutral (unsure).<sup>176</sup> Perhaps the hesitancy here is in relation to the term 'primary'. Likewise, 35% of evangelicals believe, to some extent, that many churches and organisations are placing too much emphasis on social action, with a further 25% being unsure. The over-55s are almost twice as likely to think this as the under-54s.<sup>177</sup> On the other hand, 69% of contemporary evangelicals believe that 'mission without social action is not mission', 16% are neutral and another 15% disagree.<sup>178</sup> This suggests that the confusion around social engagement that existed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century amongst evangelicals still exists in some form.

## **B. Priority of Concern for Evangelicals**

This research also highlights priority social issues amongst evangelicals, and the statistics reveal helpful indicators for highlighting how an evangelical social conscience may be awakened. The following is a compilation of some of those indicators revealed in the research.

### *i) High Priority for Contemporary Evangelicals – Poverty*

According to the research, the most highly prioritised social justice issue for the evangelical Christian in the UK is poverty. 32% of UK evangelicals, the largest percentage, believe it is the most important social issue facing the UK today.<sup>179</sup> When this percentage is compared to 4% of average Britons, the research demonstrates a specific countercultural interest in this aspect of social reform.<sup>180</sup>

The next logical question to ask, then, is why? There are many factors involved in answering that question. However, a more practical rather than theoretical answer is that 66% of evangelicals, the

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

<sup>176</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'Attitudes to Mission,' *Evangelical Alliance UK*. website, (21 February 2012, <http://www.eauk.org/church/research-and-statistics/attitudes-to-mission.cfm>).

<sup>177</sup> Evangelical, '21<sup>st</sup>.'

<sup>178</sup> Evangelical, 'Attitude.'

<sup>179</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'Faith in politics?,' *Evangelical Alliance UK*. website, (19 February 2015, <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/faith-in-politics.cfm>).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*.



highest on the list, say it is the most talked- about issue in their churches.<sup>181</sup> This could surely be no coincidence. Therefore it could be argued that sheer exposure to certain social issues results in awakened interest and activism in one particular area over another.

This activism is demonstrated both civically and politically. With regard to civic activism, the research highlights that 70% of evangelicals have donated to a food bank in the last year.<sup>182</sup> As Timms notes, 'church-based foodbanks have provided the most effective response to tackling the issue of poverty'.<sup>183</sup> On the other hand, the effect on political activism can be seen in the statistic that 61% of evangelicals say a policy 'to favour a difference to the poorest in the UK' would affect the way they vote.<sup>184</sup>

#### ii) *Low Priority for Contemporary Evangelicals – Unemployment*

This is further demonstrated at the other end of the spectrum, according to the research, unemployment is an issue evangelicals are least concerned with (2%).<sup>185</sup> Yet when measured against the amount of exposure to the issue, only 22% of evangelicals said unemployment had been talked about by their churches in the past year or so. Therefore it is understandable why this issue is of less concern to evangelicals.<sup>186</sup> These statistics establish the impact of certain factors that shape the evangelical social conscience.

#### iii) *Factors*

These factors are evident in two main areas. The area of influence and the area of education.

##### a) The area of influence

As demonstrated above, the amount of exposure inside the church to an issue can lead to an awakened consciousness towards that issue outside its walls. However, in addition to being influenced within the church, the research seems to highlight that evangelicals are just as influenced from outside sources. For example, in relation to where evangelicals receive information concerning politics, the results are as follows:

- BBC TV news – 72% (increasing in older people and church leaders);

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'Good news for the poor?', *Evangelical Alliance UK*. website, (31 May 2015, <http://www.eauk.org/church/research-and-statistics/english-church-census.cfm>)

<sup>183</sup> Timms, Stephen, 'Response to Chapter 4,' in Greg Smith (eds), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015, 100-101. 100.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Evangelical, 'Faith.'

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

- Online news services – 46% (increasing in men and younger people and 58% of people born since 1980);.
- BBC radio – 44% (increasing in men, younger people, church leaders and those voting left of centre);
- Printed newspapers – 42% (increasing in men, older people and those voting right of centre);
- Conversations with people they know – 30%;
- Social media – 26% (increasing in younger people, undecideds and those voting left of centre);
- Christian broadcasters – 13% (increasing in women, undecideds and UKIP voters).<sup>187</sup>

#### Newspaper readership:

- Intending to vote left of centre – Guardian/Observer: 62%; Independent/I: 52%; Times: 27%; Telegraph: 16%; Daily Mail: 16%;
- Intending to vote right of the centre – Guardian/Observer: 19%; Independent/i: 20%; Times: 44%; Telegraph: 60%; Daily Mail: 59%;
- Consider poverty/inequality the UK's most important issue – Guardian/Observer: 43%; Independent/i: 43%; Times: 29%;, Telegraph: 20%; Daily Mail: 17%;
- Consider immigration the UK's most important single issue – Guardian/Observer: 4%;, Independent/i: 4%;, Times: 6% Telegraph: 9%; Daily Mail: 12%.<sup>188</sup>

These statistics demonstrate the impact of the media in influencing the evangelical conscience in relation to how people vote, or the ability to reinforce already held convictions. Therefore, if the media is seemingly a major source of influence, informing political beliefs, it could be naive to suggest that these platforms don't influence other beliefs aswell, including perspectives on abortion. Influence from both churches and secular media are competing to shape the evangelical social conscience and their engagement efforts.

#### b) The area of education

If evangelicals are to be more active in concerning social issues, then educating them appears to be the first step. The statistics above highlight that, at local church level, leadership and teaching play a huge role in shaping the evangelical conscience. Therefore, the need for education on other issues is evident. The research highlights, as Clifford admits, that there are still 'those in our congregations

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<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

[who] are unsure of what they believe, whether biblically or politically'.<sup>189</sup> Large numbers find it difficult to arrive at a position on a number of political issues and therefore appear to remain silent; he comments that this is probably because 'they have not been equipped to think about these topics in the light of Scripture'.<sup>190</sup> Another factor that can hinder further progress is, as an EA publication notes, that Christian voices heard in public on certain social issues 'often seem contradictory and strident, rather than well-grounded in Scripture and contemporary reality and graciously expressed'.<sup>191</sup>

#### iv) Conclusion

In conclusion, contemporary UK evangelicalism appears to have continued, from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in its effectiveness in the area of social reform. As demonstrated, contemporary evangelicalism is an effective source of social well-being, as evangelicals are notably more socially active than the general public. However, within contemporary evangelicalism there still exists a lingering confusion as to exactly how social reform fits into the context of the overall mission of the church. In time, this may need to be addressed to prevent further division in the future.

Naturally, as in any movement, the effect of leadership and education in shaping the evangelical conscience cannot be overestimated. It has been demonstrated above that contemporary evangelicals do not remain neutral towards social issues, and their minds are the battle field where cultural influences, as demonstrated in the media above, compete with the church to gain prominence.

### **55. Perspectives on the Issue of Abortion for Contemporary Evangelicalism in the UK:Through the Lens of the Evangelical Alliance**

In light of the overall thesis topic, the following section offers insights into contemporary evangelical perspectives on the issue of abortion. Once again, the research *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals* conducted by the EA provided invaluable, calculable and verifiable statistical information. The following section demonstrates the statistics and provides brief insights into its findings.

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<sup>189</sup> Evangelical, 'Does.'

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'Are we communicating?', *Evangelical Alliance UK*. website, (05 December 2011, <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/are-we-good-neighbours.cfm>).

## **A. General Overview**

The main statistic provided by the research was a question posed whereby respondents were asked to select their perspective in regard to the proposition, 'Abortion can never be justified'. The results were as follows:

- Agree a lot – 20%;
- Agree a little – 17%;
- Unsure – 18%;
- Disagree a little – 28%;
- Disagree a lot – 17%.<sup>192</sup>

First, and most importantly, this statistic highlights the varied responses to that proposition and demonstrates the impossibility of a clear consensus position at present regarding the issue of abortion for evangelicals in the UK.

By further removing the two more conclusive positions ('agree a lot' and 'disagree a lot') and collapsing the less-conclusive positions ('agree a little', 'unsure' and 'disagree a little'), greater clarification is provided, revealing three possible perspectives for further reflection:

- Perspective 1 – Inconclusive on the issue of abortion (63%);
- Perspective 2 – Abortion is unjustified (20%);
- Perspective 3 – Abortion is justified (17%).

The percentage 63% reveals that the majority of evangelicals in the UK are inconclusive at best concerning the issue of abortion.

## **B. Ethnicity**

The research evidences sociological differences concerning evangelical perspectives on abortion. For example, when the respondents were presented with the proposition, 'Abortion can never be justified (unless the mother's life is in immediate danger)', the only result that the EA released was between

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<sup>192</sup> Evangelical, '21<sup>st</sup>.'

evangelicals who identify as Black Majority Ethnic and those who identify as White British. The results were as follows:

- Black Majority Ethnic:
  - Agree – 63%;
  - Unsure – 15%;
  - Disagree – 22%.
- White British:
  - Agree – 51%;
  - Unsure – 20%;
  - Disagree – 30%.

These figures seemingly demonstrate a marginal divergence culturally among contemporary UK evangelicals, as 63% of BME evangelicals believe abortion can never be justified whereas White British evangelicals agree less, at 51%.

### **C. Gender**

The research also highlights the issue relating to gender. To the statement, 'Abortion can never be justified (unless the mother's life is in immediate danger)', the result was thus:

- 63% of men agreed;
- 49% of women agreed.<sup>193</sup>

The research offers no clear indication as to why this variation occurs. Hypothetically, it may be the case that women have been more exposed to the issue from a pro-choice perspective. Also the fact that it is the woman's life that may be in immediate danger may potentially sway opinion.

### **D. Political Priority**

Politically, the topic of abortion is potentially divisive for contemporary UK evangelicals. Although overwhelmingly important, the divergence comes in relation to priority in swaying voting preference:

- 41% – Important to me, will affect my vote;
- 43% – Important to me but will not greatly affect my vote;

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

- 11% – Not very important to me;
- 3% – This would lessen my support for them.<sup>194</sup>

## E. Church Exposure

The research highlighted that 21% of evangelicals noted that the issue of abortion has been publicly talked about in their church, taking 15<sup>th</sup> position on the list concerning 'political issues that have been publicly talked about in churches in the past year or so', and jointly level on the list with 'Climate Change and the Global Environment' and 'Extreme Wealth and Inequality'.<sup>195</sup>

## F. Age

Unfortunately, the information released by the EA does not provide us with a clear statistics on the diversity of positions relating to age. However, Stephen Holmes commenting on the research highlights that it is actually 'younger evangelicals who are more likely to think that abortion can never be justified, while older people are more likely to that abortion, in some instances, is justifiable'.<sup>196</sup> This offers an interesting observation when contrasting evangelical youth with the youth of general society, as Anne Scanlon of Life Charity adds:

From our experience of talking to young people I can say that sadly the average young person in GB today is pro-choice. This is not because they have looked at the issue and made an informed decision but because abortion is promoted as the solution to a problem pregnancy and no one dares to suggest that abortion might not be a positive choice. The pro-life voice has been silenced on university campuses, in the media and in society in general so young people rarely, if ever, get to hear the case against abortion.<sup>197</sup>

## 6conclusion

According to the most recent statistics, contemporary evangelicalism in the UK experienced steady growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A notable factor in this growth was the movement's embrace of more cultural and theological diverse expressions of Christian belief and practice. Of course, these changes only add to the complexity of defining the movement, as still there exists no localised authority to speak on the movement's behalf.

In relation to social engagement, other than the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, historically the movement was an effective source of social reform within the UK. Contemporary evangelicals

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<sup>194</sup> Evangelical, 'Faith.'

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Holmes, 'Chapter 1', 30.

<sup>197</sup> Scanlon, Anne, 'Reflections On The 1967 Abortion Act; The Myth Of Safe, Legal And Rare,' *Both Lives Matter* Website, ().

benefited greatly from the recovery and renewal of its social conscience, as demonstrated by the foundations laid in the Keele and Lausanne conferences.

As the statistics demonstrate, contemporary evangelicalism in the UK is remarkably socially active. Therefore, the movement remains true to its historic core value of activism, which is most clearly seen in its tackling of the issue of poverty. However, the same cannot be said for the issue of abortion.

The main reasons, leading to this lack of engagement with the topic, as demonstrated by the statistics showing perspectives on the issue of abortion itself amongst contemporary UK evangelicals, are diverse. These diverse opinions were evidenced by political persuasion, ethnic background, difference in gender, and so on. All this diversity leads to a non-consensus position amongst UK evangelicals with regard to the topic of abortion.

Steve Holmes agrees this is somewhat surprising. Commenting on the research, he admits that, concerning this issue, respondents were 'ambivalent' and 'surprisingly so',<sup>198</sup> acknowledging that for evangelicals he expected more of a consensus. When evaluating the data, he adds that it is also an error 'to embrace the results uncritically as determinative for what evangelicals really think, regardless of the positions leaders and gatekeepers insist on'.<sup>199</sup> However, one wonders to what extent the movement's 'leaders and gatekeepers' insist on any perspective themselves. As demonstrated the topic ranked low on the list of priority issues.

Finally, Holmes concludes that 'until more research is conducted to explore the circumstances where evangelicals find abortion justifiable, it's unwise to interpret the findings in any great detail'.<sup>200</sup> The issue here is that this statement, perhaps unknowingly, mutes the conversation until 'more research is done'. If the topic of abortion is low on the priority list, as demonstrated by how frequently church leaders speak on the issue, then when can we expect this research to take place. This then results in the silence increasing amongst UK evangelicals. Add to this the fact that it is naive to expect evangelicals to remain neutral towards the issue: as the statistics show, evangelicals receive much of their worldview from elsewhere, as demonstrated by their engagement with the news media, which seemingly has a pro-abortion bias.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Holmes, 'Chapter 1', 30.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>201</sup> Both Lives Matter, 'Abortion, the news and compromised journalism,' *Both Lives Matter* website (13/04/2018, <https://bothlivesmatter.org/blog/abortion-news-compromised-journalism>).

## **Chapter 3: Evangelical Theology and the Issue of Abortion**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, evangelicalism in the UK was explored in all its diversity and complexity. Yet contemporary evangelicals in the UK, when guided by its leaders, become effective at engaging with social issues. However, as the EA research identified, in the matter of abortion, this does not appear to be the case. This is mainly because evangelical leaders, especially local church leaders, do not appear to be discussing the issue from the front.

In this section, the aim is to examine a leading UK evangelical leader who has spoken on the issue of abortion and therefore to identify indications as to why there may exist a silence among contemporary leaders.

As demonstrated in chapter 1, evangelicalism is a bent towards a certain theological persuasion. Thus, evangelical perspectives on abortion, one would expect, are primarily formed theologically. However, theological positions are formed by engagement with various sources, and the key question relating to the discussion around abortion is first to identify these sources. Yet the task does not end there. The next question is, which source has the primary authority over the others? Basically, which source has the last and final word? Therefore, in the next section, before arriving at the current landscape of evangelical theological perspective on abortion, it is crucial to look at theological methods – or, more specifically, evangelical theological methods – that may inform their perspectives.

### **1. Evangelical Theological Method**

#### **A. Defining Evangelical Theology**

Christian theology is the process of engagement with Christian beliefs and practice. Evangelical theology is a derivative of Christian theology. John Jefferson Davis defines evangelical theology as the 'systematic reflection on Scripture and tradition and the mission of the church in mutual relation, with Scripture as the norm'.<sup>202</sup> Davis adds that evangelical theology is 'task theology', as the 'task of evangelical theology is not merely to interpret the world, but to transform it through the authority of the exalted Lord and his inspired Word'.<sup>203</sup> As with any other type of Christian theology, whether they

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<sup>202</sup> Davis, John Jefferson, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology*, New Jersey: P&R Publishing Company, 2015. 43.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*, 47.



are knowledgeable of this or not, evangelicals reach perspectives, persuasions and viewpoints by following a method. However, the consensus among many evangelical scholars is frustration at the apparent lack of discussion surrounding theological method.

## **B. Evangelical Theological Method: Lack of Discussion**

In 2000, John G. Stackhouse Jr edited a book entitled *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*. In it, he wrote that there is a ‘fundamental conviction ... that evangelical theology needs to engage more fully in conversation about theological method’.<sup>204</sup> McGrath, in an article in the same publication, wrote, ‘there is widespread agreement within the evangelical theological community that evangelicals have not paid adequate attention to the issue of theological method, despite the fact that they have a generally high regard for theology’.<sup>205</sup> He laments that many evangelicals ‘have grown up in an intellectual environment that shapes their thinking on how theology is done and have often absorbed this without feeling the need to give it formal expression in something as rigorous as “theological method.”’<sup>206</sup>

Eighteen years later, Porter affirms the continuing need: ‘we firmly believe that having an appropriate theological method is essential to the theological task’.<sup>207</sup> For him, ‘without a method, it is only an accident if one arrives at important or viable conclusions (and how would you know anyway?)’.<sup>208</sup> This is likewise crucial in the discussion of evangelical ethics and any ethical issue such as abortion. As Bouton highlights, ‘we need to decide how to decide’.<sup>209</sup>

## **C. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral**

### *i) Introduction*

Despite the lack of discussion, attempts have been made. One recognised attempt of an evangelical theological method is the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, a method constructed retrospectively through the theology of John Wesley, one of UK evangelicalism’s most famous sons. Thorsen notes that although

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<sup>204</sup> Stackhouse Jr., John G., ‘Preface’, in John G. Stackhouse, Jr (eds), *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000, 9-11. 9.

<sup>205</sup> McGrath, ‘Evangelical’, 15-16.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>207</sup> Porter, Stanley E. & Steven M. Studebaker, ‘Preface’, in Stanley E. Porter and Steve M. Studebaker (eds), *Evangelical Theological Method: Five Views*, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2018, vii-viii. vii.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>209</sup> Boulton, Wayne G., Thomas D. Kennedy and Allen Verhey, ‘Chapter 1: An Introduction to Christian Ethics’, in Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy and Allen Verhey (eds), *From Christ To The Word: Introductory Readings In Christian Ethics*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1994, 1-11. 8.

‘Wesley did not articulate an explicit theological method’,<sup>210</sup> the Wesleyan Quadrilateral ‘represents one historic model firmly grounded in the evangelical tradition’.<sup>211</sup>

ii) *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is a paradigm, or model, of how Wesley conceived the task of theology. Wesley himself never invented the term or used it;<sup>212</sup> it was an American, Albert Outler, who first referred to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in the late 1960s as an approach to how Wesley reflected on theology.<sup>213</sup> The quadrilateral affirmed Scripture as Wesley’s ultimate rule and last word on the standard of the Christian faith.<sup>214</sup>

iii) *Affirmed Sola Scriptura*

Wesley, Thorsen notes, ‘by faith affirmed the primary religious authority of Scripture’,<sup>215</sup> and Scripture was ‘a source of religious authority unlike and superior to any other’.<sup>216</sup> Wesley himself wrote, ‘I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice than the Holy Scriptures.’<sup>217</sup> His justification for this primary position was his affirmation of the inward witness of the Holy Spirit in his own words:

Scripture is inspired of God – The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer. Hence it is so profitable for doctrine, for instruction of the ignorant, for the reproof or conviction of them that are in error or sin or amendment of whatever is amiss.<sup>218</sup>

iv) *Pursued a Model that Could Integrate Different Sources*

Although Wesley affirmed the foundational reformed doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, according to Thorsen, he interpreted ‘solus to mean “primarily rather than “solely” or “exclusively”’.<sup>219</sup> Wesley, he notes, ‘pursued a theological method that could integrate various sources of religious authority’,<sup>220</sup> in summary:

Wesley sought to formulate theological ideas consonant with Scripture. But in order to describe the wholeness and dynamic characteristic of true, scriptural religion (a phrase he liked to use), Wesley appealed to tradition, reason, and experience as complementary sources of religious authority. These sources, together with the primary religious

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<sup>210</sup> Thorsen, *Wesleyan*, 2.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid*, 76-77.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, 77-78.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, 157.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

authority of Scripture, contributed to an approach to theology that continues to provide insight for Christians today.<sup>221</sup>

In conclusion, albeit not explicitly by Wesley himself, retrospectively, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral offers one historic model of a viable evangelical theology method.

#### **D. Evangelical propositionalism**

Whilst the Wesleyan Quadrilateral offers one example of a historic evangelical theological method, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Porter notes, ‘the theological methods that dominated the evangelical mind for most of the twentieth century were evangelical propositionalism, the various forms of liberal theology, and the vision of theology articulated by Karl Barth, called neo-orthodoxy.’<sup>222</sup> However, he writes, ‘although Barth and neo-orthodoxy were central to twentieth-century theology, they were not readily embraced by mainstream evangelical theology’.<sup>223</sup> Therefore, the two primary influences on evangelical theology were evangelical propositionalism and liberal theology.<sup>224</sup>

Charles Hodge (1797–1878) was the father of evangelical propositionalism.<sup>225</sup> According to Porter:

Hodge articulated a modern adaptation of the older scholastic method of theology. Theology is a science, Hodge believed. The Bible is to the theologian what the world is to the scientist. The Bible is a field of data waiting to be scrutinized and understood. The Bible is the theologian’s ‘store-house of facts,’ according to Hodge. Theology is a science because it follows an inductive, investigative approach that yields indubitable facts and statements that one must believe. The task of theology, therefore, is to collect the biblical data and formulate theological principles from these data.<sup>226</sup>

The propositional theological method, according to Porter:

is the process of gathering information and evidence from the Bible and articulating these data in doctrinal statements. This approach is called ‘propositional’ because it believes that the task of theology is to expound the doctrinal content of Scripture. Theology articulates the teachings of the Bible in propositions or doctrines. Theology relates to the data of the Bible the way theory and data do in other fields of science. A Christian doctrine is, therefore, the theological equivalent of Newton’s theory of gravity. A doctrine is a theological proposition derived from the field of biblical data.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>222</sup> Porter, ‘Method’, 7.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, 7-8.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

This propositional method is appealing to evangelicals as it offers a method by which to elevate the primacy of their authority Scripture and to formulate doctrine and theological statements in light of this primacy, as Porter comments:

Propositional theology sees doctrine and theology arising almost directly from the pages of Scripture. Theological statements are expositions of the teachings of the Bible. Although formally not equivalent to the Bible, these statements have the same functional authority. Theological disagreements, therefore, become matters not of biblical interpretation but of fidelity to the faith and the authority of the Bible. Tradition and cultural context do not play an explicit role in propositional theology.<sup>228</sup>

In summary, the evangelical propositionalist, Porter notes, at a functional level, has 'one son the Bible'.<sup>229</sup> One notable example of a contemporary evangelical theologian who has been heavily influenced by this method is American Wayne Grudem.<sup>230</sup>

However, this method is not without its critics. Porter comments that it has become 'fashionable today'<sup>231</sup> to critique the evangelical propositionalist because of their rationalist view of theology and faith. However, he adds, 'this method's strength, however, is the possession of a clear method'.<sup>232</sup> Also, a potential danger with such a high view of Scripture within the method, as Porter notes, is making the Bible if not absolutely, then nearly, the exclusive source of theology.<sup>233</sup>

Owing to the nature of the evangelical movement itself, as demonstrated earlier, there exists no single authority to speak on its behalf; likewise, theologically there exists no single authoritative voice to state how the theological task, including method, should be undertaken. However, the Wesleyan model and the propositional model offer two notable examples of what could be classed as evangelical methods. However, what is notably agreed on is the privileged position of the primacy of Scripture, as demonstrated within these methods.

## **E. Scriptural Authority in an Evangelical Method**

### *i) Primacy of Scripture*

The main distinction in evangelical theological method, as opposed to other theological methods, is the primacy of Scripture. It is through the primacy of Scripture in their method that evangelicals demonstrate most clearly their reformed heritage. Porter affirms that 'evangelicalism is heir to the

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid*, 8-9.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

protestant doctrine of sola scriptura',<sup>234</sup> and Thorsen adds, 'today evangelicalism remains firmly ensconced in the tradition of sola Scriptura'.<sup>235</sup> Within 20<sup>th</sup>-century evangelicalism, this primacy was reaffirmed. Stackhouse writes that Scripture 'captures the authoritative place of the Bible in evangelical theology',<sup>236</sup> and adds, 'truly evangelical thinking about any subject will always privilege scriptural interpretation and never wilfully contradict what the Scripture at least seems to say'.<sup>237</sup> Historically, this has been the case also. McGrath writes, 'this commitment to the priority and authority of Scripture has become an integral element of the evangelical tradition',<sup>238</sup> and John Stott affirms that 'the supremacy of Scripture has always been and always will be the first hallmark of an evangelical'.<sup>239</sup>

## ii) *Justification for Primacy of Scripture*

With what justification do evangelicals place such a priority on Scripture? Simply because they believe it is the Word of God. Porter notes, 'not only does the Bible contain the Word of God or testify to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, though it clearly does, but evangelicals maintain that the text is the Word of God'.<sup>240</sup> J.I. Packer summarises this perspective for evangelicals:

the Bible is, in Calvin's phrase, the scepter of God, the instrument of divine rule, whereby the Father and the Son personally and authoritatively communicate with us through the Spirit, instructing, enlightening, feeding, warning, forming, assuring, encouraging, and equipping us for every form of service to God and our fellow human beings.<sup>241</sup>

Davis adds that 'the evangelical interpreter will treat the Bible for what it truly is, namely, a supernatural revelation of a supernatural redemption'.<sup>242</sup> It is because of this perspective that Oliver Barclay highlights that, for the evangelical, 'all authorities have to give way to it'.<sup>243</sup> This can be a cause for ridicule against evangelicals, who are often warding off charges of 'bibliolatry'. However, they are often quick to respond that they worship not the Bible but the God who has revealed himself and his will in the Bible, meaning, therefore, that they seek to obey and remain faithful to all that is within it.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Porter, 'Method', 20.

<sup>235</sup> Thorsen, *Wesleyan*, 154-155.

<sup>236</sup> Porter, 'Method', 21-22.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>238</sup> McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 59.

<sup>239</sup> Edwards, 'Evangelical', 49.

<sup>240</sup> Porter, 'Method', 20-21.

<sup>241</sup> Packer, 'Maintaining', 187.

<sup>242</sup> Davis, *Foundations*, 257.

<sup>243</sup> Barclay, *Evangelicalism*, 10.

<sup>244</sup> Davis, *Foundations*, 176.

However, although there are a variety of perspectives on the exact nature of inspiration – for example, the discussion surrounding inerrancy and infallibility – Porter acknowledges that contemporary evangelicals generally ‘affirm that it [Scripture] is the revelation of God, of God’s redemptive work and of God’s design for life in this world. It is, therefore, the primary source of theology.’<sup>245</sup>

## **F. Evangelical Method and Interdisciplinary Sources**

The discussion regarding evangelical theological method leads invariably to the discussion surrounding other sources.<sup>246</sup> It has been demonstrated that, in evangelicalism, Scripture takes the primary position; however, the discussion as to how Scripture relates to other sources remains. Although Scripture is the primary source of evangelical authority, there is generally a respectful attitude towards secondary sources amongst evangelicals. Thorsen notes, ‘although Sola Scriptura has been a faithful model of evangelical theology ... it does not deny the usefulness of other sources of religious authority’.<sup>247</sup> He adds that these sources serve ‘to confirm, evaluate, and apply what was found in Scripture’.<sup>248</sup> Scripture, McGrath adds, ‘defines the center of gravity of evangelism not the limits of its reading or knowledge’.<sup>249</sup>

### *i) Relationship Between Scripture and Other Sources*

In spite of evangelicalism’s historic affirmation of Scripture being the Word of God, secondary sources are invaluable for the evangelical interpreter. Secondary sources guard the evangelical interpreter against him or herself, as Stackhouse warns: ‘the Bible is God’s Word written, but our interpretations of it are not’.<sup>250</sup> He adds that ‘our interpretations of the Bible may well need to be adjusted in the light of our interpretations of God’s other means of revelation, whether science, history, tradition, spiritual experience, and so on’.<sup>251</sup> Thorsen agrees: ‘evangelical theology needs to have a dynamic sense of the interdependent sources of religious authority. It is naïve and critically suspect to think otherwise’.<sup>252</sup> However, as Stackhouse acknowledges ‘truly evangelical thinking about any subject will always privilege scriptural interpretation’.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Porter, ‘Method’, 21.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>247</sup> Thorsen, *Wesleyan*, 150.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>249</sup> McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 61.

<sup>250</sup> Stackhouse, ‘Evangelical’, 47.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>252</sup> Thorsen, *Wesleyan*, 150.

<sup>253</sup> Stackhouse, ‘Evangelical’, 47.

The discussion surrounding the hierarchal ordering of authorities and sources cannot be overlooked. Final positions on doctrine and ethics are often a result of this foundational methodology and ordering. An alternative example would be Bruce Birch who, in his book *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*, comments, 'it would be a mistake to attempt a hierarchical ordering of authorities among sources, biblical and nonbiblical'.<sup>254</sup> Birch advocates for a 'relationship among sources is dynamic and dialogical'.<sup>255</sup> However, Martin H. Scharlemann's response typifies an evangelical response when he acknowledges that 'God is still the Lord of history, and that he can and often does upset human calculations. More weight, therefore, must be put on a respect for basic theological principles set forth in the Biblical revelation'.<sup>256</sup>

## **2. Evangelical Ethics**

### **A. Introduction**

The previous section highlighted the discussion regarding an evangelical theological method. Now, if theological method is rarely discussed amongst evangelicals, one can imagine the diminishing effect this has had on the discussion. Understanding evangelical ethical method is crucial, as foundationally it shapes how evangelicals arrive at the positions they do on abortion.

### **B. Christian Ethics in General**

In the field of ethics, standards or norms are identified to reveal, as Boulton points out, 'the characteristics of a life worth living'.<sup>257</sup> The reason there is so much discussion around the field of ethics in general is owing to the defining of what exactly those standards or norms are.<sup>258</sup>

Christian ethics is no different. As with all normative ethics, the aim is to identify the characteristics of a life worth living or the standards for conduct and character. Christian ethics undertakes this same task with reference to Scripture. Boulton adds, 'Christian ethics is the disciplined attempt to explain what the significance of morality is for Christians and to identify those norms which should inform and guide the Christian in his or her way of living towards the world'.<sup>259</sup>

As is the case with theological method, there also exists diversity within Christian ethical method. Robin Gill comments, 'Christian ethics is a highly pluralistic discipline. Fundamental differences are

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<sup>254</sup> Birch, Bruce C., Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda and Larry L. Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life: A New Conversation*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018. 51.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> Scharlemann, Martin H., 'Abortion,' in Carl Henry (eds), *Baker's Dictionary Of Christian Ethics*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973, 1-3. 1.

<sup>257</sup> Boulton, 'Chapter 1', 3.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

apparent in the presuppositions, methods, and conclusions.<sup>260</sup> Evangelical ethical method likewise has its own presuppositions, method and conclusions.

### C. Evangelical Ethics

#### i) *Evangelical Ethical Method*

It is a person's engagement with Scripture that makes Christian ethics Christian. In some shape or form, Scripture plays an authoritative role in all Christian ethical methods. For example, Boulton notes, 'with virtually one voice, Christians acknowledge the authority of Scripture for the moral life'.<sup>261</sup> Bruce Birch agrees: 'all traditions that regard the text of the Bible as Scripture would agree that these texts should be important resources for Christian ethics'.<sup>262</sup> However, for an evangelical ethical method, as has already been demonstrated earlier with regard to theological method in general, it is the position of this authoritative role that distinguishes it from other Christian ethical methods. As Davis notes, 'evangelical ethics is first of all robustly biblical'.<sup>263</sup> He adds that, for evangelicals:

The teachings of Scripture are the final court of appeal for ethics. Human reason, church tradition, and the natural and social sciences may aid moral reflection, but divine revelation, found in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, constitutes the 'bottom line' of the decision-making process. Informed ethical reflection will carefully weigh the various words of men, both past and present, but the Word of God must cast the deciding vote.<sup>264</sup>

On the other hand, Birch 'sees the Bible as normative in *some way*; otherwise the ethics we are talking about are not Christian ethics. With that said, the Bible is never the *sole source of authority* (despite claims to the contrary), though it has a unique authoritative function'[italics mine].<sup>265</sup> Evangelicals, however, see the Bible as not normative in 'some way' but as the primary norm or, as Porter notes, the 'norming norm'.<sup>266</sup>

#### ii) *Evangelical Ethical Decisions Are Shaped by Scripture*

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<sup>260</sup> Gill, Robin, *A Textbook of Christian Ethics: New Revised Edition*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2002. xiv.

<sup>261</sup> Boulton, Wayne G., Thomas D. Kennedy and Allen Verhey, 'Chapter 2: Scripture and Christian Ethics', in Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy and Allen Verhey (eds), *From Christ To The Word: Introductory Readings In Christian Ethics*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1994, 15-16. 15.

<sup>262</sup> Birch, Bruce C., 'Scripture In Ethics: Methodological Issues', in Joel B. Green (eds), *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2011, 27-34. 27

<sup>263</sup> Davis, John Jefferson, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing The Church Today – Fourth Edition*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984. ix.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>265</sup> Birch, *Bible*, 41.

<sup>266</sup> Porter, 'Method', 20.



Owing to Scripture being the primary norm for evangelical ethics, ethical decisions are shaped primarily by a belief in the divinely authoritative guidance received from God in Scripture.<sup>267</sup> As Anna Robbins notes, for evangelicals, 'doctrine forms the heart of ethical method',<sup>268</sup> meaning that evangelicals such as I. Howard Marshall start 'with the assumption that Scripture has something relevant to say on the subject of ethics'.<sup>269</sup>

### iii) *Evangelical Ethics and Other Sources*

Also, as discussed earlier regarding theological method in general, the charge that evangelicals pay no respect to secondary sources is misguided. The same is the case with evangelical ethics. For example David F. Wright writes, 'if an evangelical social ethic is to be Bible-based and gospel-based, it must also be earthed in the realities of society. Here belong the essential contributions of social scientists and fieldworkers, whether doctors, lawyers, parents or politicians'.<sup>270</sup> This means the relationship between evangelical ethics and other sources should be reflected by the same process within an evangelical theological method. The relevance of this for the abortion discussion is paramount, as will be seen in the following section. Boulton highlights the relevance with the following comment:

The debate of Christians about whether or not abortion is ever morally permissible for Christians, and, if so, under what circumstances, involves, you see, a debate about the very character of Christian ethics. What are the sources for the moral reflection of Christians? The Bible, the Christian tradition, science, and philosophy are each recognized as sources by most Christians, and each of these is frequently appealed to, but does any one of these have greater moral authority than the others? And if so, why? In what does its greater authority lie? Does Scripture always have the first and last word? Or only the first word, the last word belonging to either tradition, philosophy, or science? These are difficult questions, but they are among the most crucial for Christian ethics.<sup>271</sup>

### iv) *Impact of Overarching Hermeneutical Principles*

Finally, it must be noted, as Gill points out, that 'a strong affirmation of biblical inspiration and authority does not solve all problems related to Christian ethics'.<sup>272</sup> He adds, 'A high view of Scripture calls for honest engagement with the hermeneutical issues and the difficulties we face'.<sup>273</sup> McGrath

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<sup>267</sup> Stackhouse Jr., John G., '2. Evangelical Theology Should Be Evangelical', in John G. Stackhouse, Jr (eds), *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000, 39-58. 48.

<sup>268</sup> Robbins, Anna, '5. Ethical Models for the Twilight Zone of Church and Culture,' in David Hilborn (eds), *Movement for change: Evangelical Perspectives on Social Transformation*, Bucks: Paternoster, 2004, 70-94. 74.

<sup>269</sup> Marshall, I. Howard, 'Chapter Two – Using the Bible in Ethics,' in David F. Wright (eds), *Essays In Evangelical Social Ethics*, Devon: Paternoster Press Ltd, 1978, 39-55. 39.

<sup>270</sup> Wright, David F., 'Introduction,' in David F. Wright (eds), *Essays In Evangelical Social Ethics*, Devon: Paternoster Press Ltd, 1978, 7-15. 11-12.

<sup>271</sup> Boulton, 'Chapter 1', 8.

<sup>272</sup> Hollinger, Dennis P., *Choosing The Good: Christian Ethics In A Complex World*, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002. 153.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

affirms that evangelicals are aware of this engagement and that the discussion surrounding hermeneutics 'has become important within evangelicalism since about 1975'.<sup>274</sup> He admits that 'there is considerable disagreement over the methods and assumptions that are to be used'.<sup>275</sup> Finally, he points out, 'the issue of how Scripture is to be interpreted cannot be ignored and constitutes one of the most important areas in which evangelicals are wrestling with issues of method'.<sup>276</sup> This discussion surrounding hermeneutics is one that bears considerable weight on evangelical ethics also, as overarching hermeneutical preferences can affect a person's interpretation of biblical texts that can justify either a pro-abortion position or an anti-abortion position.

For example, take the overarching hermeneutical principle of 'love'. Now, as Hauerwas points out, 'no doubt love has a central place in the Bible and the Christian life, but when it becomes the primary locus of the biblical ethic it turns into an abstraction that cannot be biblically justified'.<sup>277</sup> With regard to how a 'love' hermeneutic relates to the topic surrounding abortion, Boulton notes:

it is not obvious exactly what love is or what it requires and prohibits. Could it be loving to have an abortion? There is a good deal of disagreement among those who profess to be Christians whether this could be the case, in part because there are disagreements about what 'love' is and requires.<sup>278</sup>

Yet one evangelical perspective of how this 'love hermeneutical principle' could come to bear on the discussion surrounding abortion would be that of Michael J. Gorman. He directly applies this principle to the discussion by stating that it is 'Christlike, sacrificial love to embrace the pregnant woman and her child in utero with spiritual and tangible support'.<sup>279</sup>

Another example could be the overarching hermeneutical principle of 'justice', yet Boulton admits, 'it is almost as difficult to understand what justice requires as what love requires'.<sup>280</sup> Once love and justice are defined, he adds, 'Christian thinkers will also need some account of how love and justice are related'.<sup>281</sup> One contemporary evangelical organisation that has sought to bring this

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<sup>274</sup> McGrath, 'Evangelical', 29-30.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>277</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley, '7. The Moral Authority of Scripture', in Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy and Allen Verhey (eds), *From Christ To The Word: Introductory Readings In Christian Ethics*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1994, 33-50. 38.

<sup>278</sup> Boulton, 'Chapter 1', 9.

<sup>279</sup> Gorman, Michael J., 'Abortion', in Joel B. Green (eds), *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2011, 35-36. 36.

<sup>280</sup> Boulton, 'Chapter 1', 9.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

hermeneutical principle to the table is the EA. It discusses abortion as an example of the ‘justice paradox’:

The debate over abortion is one of the clearest examples of this justice paradox. Some campaigners will argue that justice requires allowing women to do with their bodies whatever they want, and include ending a pregnancy within that scope. Others, and Christian tradition stands firmly in this corner, make the case that justice requires standing up for the most vulnerable in society. To answer one person’s plea for justice could lead to an unjust outcome in the eyes of the other.<sup>282</sup>

To summarise, Boulton highlights that the discussion surrounding ‘which best captures a Christian way of living towards the world. That debate continues today.’<sup>283</sup> However, as the conversation continues, Gorman is one example of an optimistic approach:

This historical witness demonstrates that Scripture can have a key role in the abortion debate... a hermeneutic is needed that recognizes the difficulty of the issue, expresses pastoral sensitivity, and preserves the basic requirements of covenant faithfulness. Recent work on metathemes in the Bible’s moral vision, individual and corporate baptismal identity, virtue ethics, narrative, and analogy may provide a way forward.<sup>284</sup>

### **C. Conclusion**

In conclusion, all these aspects make the task of evangelical ethics somewhat overwhelming. This is especially the case with abortion, often leading to the dangerous temptation, as pointed out by Hollinger, that ‘one possible option is to simply ignore the issue, which of course a small number of Christians choose to do’.<sup>285</sup> Yet, as John Stott states, ‘Christians cannot opt out of personal decision making or public discussion regarding this topic [abortion] merely because of its complexity.’<sup>286</sup> In the following section, Stott offers an example of a self-professed UK evangelical, bringing an evangelical ethical method to bear on the discussion surrounding abortion.

### **3. A UK Evangelical Theological Perspective on the Issue of Abortion**

The aim of this section is to discover and analyse whether there are any factors, from a theoretical standpoint, that may contribute to a silence on the issue of abortion amongst contemporary UK evangelicalism, and to what extent.

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<sup>282</sup> Evangelical Alliance, *What Kind Of Society: Vision and Voice for the UK Church*, London, 2017.

<sup>283</sup> Boulton, ‘Chapter 1’, 9.

<sup>284</sup> Gorman, ‘Abortion’, 36.

<sup>285</sup> Hollinger, *Choosing*, 154.

<sup>286</sup> Stott, John, *Abortion*, London: Marshall Morgan & Stott, 1984.

The criterion was to find a person who has been published on the issue of abortion whilst also having influence within contemporary evangelicalism in the UK. The person chosen for this task is John Stott.

### A. Justification for Using John Stott

Other than being a notable UK evangelical leader and thinker, there are three other main reasons to justify selecting John Stott as a suitable conversation partner in this theoretical analysis:

i) *His Influence, Still, Within Contemporary UK Evangelicalism*

The research, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals*<sup>287</sup> released by the EA, revealed the top 10 most influential public figures impacting UK evangelicalism. Two British theologians, John Stott (15%) and Tom Wright (10%), led the list.<sup>287</sup> Therefore, as of 2011, John Stott was the most influential public figure impacting UK evangelicalism.

ii) *His Credibility as a Theologian*

In his lifetime John Stott published more than 50 books.<sup>288</sup> His credibility as a theologian was acknowledged by other leading UK evangelical scholars. For example, J.I. Packer notes in the foreword to, potentially Stott's standout publication, *The Cross of Christ*:

all the qualities that we expect of him – biblical precision, thoughtfulness and thoroughness, order and method, moral alertness and the measured tread, balanced judgement and practical passion.<sup>289</sup>

Christopher Wright affirms, 'John Stott had a Bible-saturated, God-centered, Christ-focused worldview. Those were the spectacles he put on before settling his gaze on any issue.'<sup>290</sup> Likewise, Alistair McGrath acknowledges that Stott 'is widely regarded as one of the greatest Christian writers, speakers, thinkers and leaders of the twentieth century'.<sup>291</sup>

Outside UK evangelicalism, Stott is also revered. In 2005, he appeared in *Time* magazine's list of 100 most influential people. Billy Graham, commenting on his addition, wrote:

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<sup>287</sup> Evangelical, 'Time.'

<sup>288</sup> Langham Partnership, 'Bibliography of John RW Stott's books,' *Langham Partnership website*, (<https://langham.org/who-we-are/about-john-stott/influential-books/bibliography-of-john-rw-stotts-books/>).

<sup>289</sup> Stott, John, *The Cross of Christ*, Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014. (Endorsements)

<sup>290</sup> Stott, John & Christopher Wright, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 35.

<sup>291</sup> Stott, *The Cross*, 7.

I can't think of anyone who has been more effective in introducing so many people to a biblical world view. He represents a touchstone of authentic biblical scholarship that, in my opinion, has scarcely been paralleled since the days of the 16th century European Reformers.<sup>292</sup>

### iii) *Impact Within the Abortion Discussion*

Arguably, John Stott was the key individual spearheading the recovery of the evangelical social conscience in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was integrally involved with the conference at Keele in 1967 and also wider evangelicalism with the Lausanne Congress. As mentioned in more depth in the previous section, Lausanne's impact, of which Barclay notes Stott as 'the single greatest influence',<sup>293</sup> cannot be underestimated. Fred Catherwood reflects that 'Lausanne has been seen by Christians from all over the world as a major turning point in the history of the evangelical Church'.<sup>294</sup> Al Tizon adds that 'the Lausanne covenant marked a turning point in evangelical thinking'.<sup>295</sup> It was at Lausanne that Stott's paper called Christians to remember they were called to both the fulfilment of a great commission (Matt. 28:19-20) and a great commandment (Matt. 22:39).<sup>296</sup>

Shortly after Lausanne, in 1984, Stott wrote the book *Issues Facing Christians Today*, although, by his own admission, he was 'in no sense a specialist in moral theology or social ethics'.<sup>297</sup> Referring to the earlier neglect of evangelical engagement in social reform topics, *Issues* was his 'own contribution to the catching up process'.<sup>298</sup> It was in *Issues* that, arguably for the first time, a major influential UK evangelical had written extensively on the topic of abortion. *Issues* would go on to have a further three editions released (1990, 1999 and 2006).

In conclusion, considering Stott's influence within contemporary UK evangelicalism, his theological credibility and his contribution to the discussion of an evangelical perspective on abortion, he offers a credible primary conversation partner with whom to analyse the abortion debate for evangelicals in the UK. His 1984 publication, *Abortion*,<sup>299</sup> will be the primary literature under review.

The objective of this section, then, is to gain insight as to whether there is any aspect of the theoretical review, specifically looking at methodology and content, that might indicate why there may be a silence within contemporary evangelicalism, as demonstrated in chapter 1.

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<sup>292</sup> Time, 'The 2005 Time 100,' *Time website*, ().

<sup>293</sup> Barclay, *Evangelicalism*, 107.

<sup>294</sup> Catherwood, *Five*, 38.

<sup>295</sup> Tizon, 'Evangelism,' 173.

<sup>296</sup> Tidball, *Who*, 190.

<sup>297</sup> Stott, *Issues*, xi.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> Stott's publication *Abortion* was the standalone chapter on abortion from his larger publication *Issues Facing Christians Today*.

## B. Implicit Outline for Methodology

### i) *Method*

Before entering into the discussion, Stott, implicitly, lays down a foundation for his theological method. His intention is to offer a contemporary Christian perspective on the issue. He first defines contemporary Christianity as '*historic, biblical Christianity*'.<sup>300</sup> This definition may appear somewhat vague and broad; however, the intention of this maybe to reach a wider Christian audience.

Regardless, it is this definition of contemporary Christianity that he seeks to have 'creatively applied to the contemporary world with its complex questions of *social, sexual, medical and personal ethics*'.<sup>301</sup>

Before launching in to the discussion of abortion he offers, albeit not explicitly, four foundational areas that could be applied to any number of ethical dilemmas. These four areas are identified as thus:

- i) Authority;
- ii) Reason for involvement;
- iii) Appeals to heritage;
- iv) Strategy for engagement.

### ii) *Authority*

Stott alludes to the authority that primarily informs his perspective on any number of social issues by asking, 'Has the Bible anything to say about our modern dilemmas?'.<sup>302</sup> This comment should not be overlooked, as here he demonstrates his evangelical methodology, in that the Bible is the primary place where he starts to seek answers to 'modern dilemmas'. The Bible, he states, 'contains God-given principles of thought and action'<sup>303</sup> for approaching ethical dilemmas. Stott affirms this methodology elsewhere. In his book *Issues Facing Christians Today*, he notes that when applying himself to the issues of the day, 'I begin with a commitment to the Bible as God's Word written'.<sup>304</sup>

### ii) *Reason for Involvement*

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<sup>300</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 3.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> Stott, *Issues*, xi.

In 1984, the context in which *Issues facing Christians Today* was written was primarily as an outworking of Stott's dedication in seeking to mobilise evangelicals to recapture their heritage of activism and once again to become an effective force for good in society. The challenge posed by Stott in his introduction was, 'Is it our responsibility, though, to busy ourselves with social question? Should we not rather concentrate on evangelism and leave social action aside?'<sup>305</sup> Now this may appear strange to 21<sup>st</sup>-century evangelicals who, as demonstrated in chapter 2, are notably engaged in social reform. However, at the time, Stott felt that his answer, 'words and works should go together in or Christian service too',<sup>306</sup> needed to continually be heralded.

### iii) *Appeals to Heritage*

If Stott offers a somewhat broad definition to 'contemporary Christianity', as discussed earlier, it is when he appeals to Christianity's historical involvement in social reform that he implicitly aligns evangelicalism as synonymous with his mentioning of contemporary Christianity throughout the rest of the book. He notes, 'our evangelical forebears in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have left us a wonderful example of their combined evangelistic and social concerns'.<sup>307</sup> Yet, as has already been mentioned thoroughly, Stott highlights the disengagement with social reform found within 20<sup>th</sup> century evangelicalism, stating that:

'for the first half of this century, however, we somehow managed to mislay our social conscience. Now that we are gradually recovering it, we have much catching up to do'.<sup>308</sup>

### iv) *Strategy for Engagement*

After demonstrating his authority, the reason for 'our' involvement and appealing to the evangelical heritage on social issues, finally Stott seeks to encourage and mobilise 'contemporary Christians' into action and engagement. He does this in two ways: highlighting one approach and another need:

- Approach – Stott appeals to historic evangelical activism, writing that Christians are to 'get into the debate and seek to influence public opinion towards approving and desiring God's way'.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 3.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*, 3-4.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

- Need – Finally, Stott implies that there is a lack of leadership in the area of social reform and makes the plea to God to ‘give us in this generation more Christian leader with a sensitive conscience, a clear mind and a courageous leaders heart!’<sup>310</sup>

In conclusion, within Stott’s introduction, elements of a classical evangelical theological method begin to emerge, with an emphasis on the need to engage with moral dilemmas primarily biblically. Also two core values identified in Bebbington’s quadrilateral are also evident: *biblicism* and *activism*.

Stott also asserts that if there is too be any success in the area of social reform, then there must be strong leadership. This aspect was demonstrated within the analysis of the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals* research: where there was strong leadership – as in discussion from the leaders at the front of church speaking on social issues, such as poverty – evangelical activism followed.

#### **4. John Stott and the Issue of Abortion**

##### **A. Introduction**

After laying down his convictions for why ‘contemporary Christians (evangelicals)’ should be concerned and engage with social issues in general, Stott turns to the specific issue of abortion. Throughout this section a full review of the content and method will be analysed. The aim of this whole analysis is to discover any factors that may contribute to the apparent silence within the evangelical church more broadly.

##### **B. A ‘Complex’ Issue**

Stott opens the whole discussion with the statement, ‘the debate over abortion is admittedly complex’.<sup>311</sup> First and foremost, the rhetorical use of the adjective ‘complex’ appears to be a favourite among evangelical theologians commenting on the discussion concerning abortion. For example, Wayne Boulton notes that ‘the complexity of Christian ethics is illustrated well through the topic of abortion’,<sup>312</sup> and Martin H. Scharlemann adds, ‘of all ethical decisions individuals confront in a culture growing continuously more secular few involve greater complexity in the application of basic principles than the matter of abortion’.<sup>313</sup> For Stott, this first sentence sets the tone and framework for the rest of the discussion. Rhetorically, the reader appears immediately to be thrust into a daunting task. The reason Stott provides for this apparent complexity is because abortion ‘has medical, legal,

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<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>312</sup> Boulton, ‘Chapter 1’, 6.

<sup>313</sup> Scharlemann, ‘Abortion,’ 1.



theological, ethical, social and personal aspects'.<sup>314</sup> Whilst identifying the different sources involved in the discussion concerning abortion, Stott states that Christians cannot opt out of the discussion purely because 'of its complexity'.<sup>315</sup> However, he acknowledges that, in fact, 'two factors should bring it the top of our agenda'.<sup>316</sup>

Again, this statement should not be overlooked, as here Stott makes two interesting claims. The first is that abortion should be at the top of 'our agenda'. In spite of how broadly he defines 'contemporary Christians', what is certain, as demonstrated above, is that he certainly includes evangelical Christians within this bracket. Considering that, in the 2011 EA research results, the topic of abortion found itself as 15<sup>th</sup> on the list of political issues talked about by church leaders from the front,<sup>317</sup> 21<sup>st</sup>-century evangelicals appear not to share Stott's conviction. This primary position is shared by fellow evangelical, John Jefferson Davis, who states:

at any given time there may be a whole spectrum of moral issues in society that could be the focus of efforts to change the laws. Given limited time and energy, however, an individual or a church will need to focus on issues that have special urgency or crucial implications for the body politic. Both state-run lotteries and abortion, for example, are public policy issues with moral dimensions. But abortion is literally a matter of life and death, while lotteries are not, and hence the former concern deserves a higher place in the list of priorities for social action, other considerations being equal.<sup>318</sup>

Stott's second claim, considering our specific interest in the theological engagement of evangelicals, is that the first of these 'two factors', as to why the topic should be at top of evangelicals agenda, is theological.

i) *The Theological Factor*

This theological factor is doctrinal in nature, with appeals to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the doctrine of the sanctity of life.<sup>319</sup>

The first doctrine discussed is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Stott notes, 'all Christian people believe that Almighty God is the only giver, sustainer and taker away-of life',<sup>320</sup> citing Acts 17:25, Psalm 104:29 and Job 1:21 as biblical justification. He then asserts, 'to the Christian, then, both life-giving and life-taking are divine prerogatives'<sup>321</sup> (acknowledging that the taking of life may be permitted only by 'divine mandate', for example, as elsewhere in the Bible capital punishment and holy war is

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<sup>314</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 5.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> Evangelical, 'Faith'

<sup>318</sup> Davis, *Evangelical*, 14.

<sup>319</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 5-6.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

sanctioned). To support this statement, Stott turns first not to an evangelical or even a Protestant Christian but to Mother Teresa, a Roman Catholic, who stated, 'only God can decide life and death ...That is why abortion is such a terrible sin.'<sup>322</sup> Stott then references fellow evangelical Francis Schaeffer.<sup>323</sup> It was Schaeffer who wrote in his book *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* that abortion 'strikes at the heart of our most basic beliefs about God and man'.<sup>324</sup> Further, he writes, 'of all the subjects relating to the erosion of the sanctity of human life, abortion is the keystone'.<sup>325</sup> Schaeffer's influence on Stott is plain to see. These two individuals, at the time, were potentially two of the most renowned individuals speaking on the issue of abortion. However, both Mother Teresa and Schaeffer and their perspectives were removed from the fourth edition of *Issues*, for an unknown reason.

The second doctrinal factor Stott mentions as a theological reason as to why the issue should be at top of Christians' agenda is the doctrine of the sanctity of life. He states, 'for, however undeveloped the embryo may still be, everybody agrees that it is living and human'.<sup>326</sup> Stott chose to use no scriptural references to provide biblical justification for the doctrine itself and, by stating that 'everybody agrees', offers a rhetorical technique that may be ambitious, especially considering the landscape of contemporary evangelicalism. Finally, in summary, he notes, 'if both divine sovereignty and human dignity are being challenged by the abortion debate, no conscientious Christian can stand aside from it'.<sup>327</sup> Unfortunately, again contemporary evangelicalism demonstrates the opposite.

## ii) *The Factor of the Revolution in Public Attitudes*

The first factor, then, is doctrinal and therefore theological, whereas the second factor Stott believes is a result of the revolution in public attitudes. These attitudes are evident in two main areas: the medical profession and a shift within abortion legislation. The pinnacle of this shift arrived with the change in legislation with Mr David Steel's 1967 Abortion Act.<sup>328</sup>

## iii) *Conclusion*

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<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>324</sup> Koop, C. Everett & Francis A. Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened To The Human Race?*, Illinois: Crossway, 1983. X.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>326</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 6.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

In conclusion, Stott provides two factors why abortion topic should be at the top of the agenda for evangelicals. Yet, as demonstrated in chapter 2 through the EA research, this is not the case for contemporary evangelicals, as it falls in 15<sup>th</sup> place for leaders speaking out on the issue. This shift in primary position is also evidenced within the editions of *Issues* itself. The 4<sup>th</sup> edition completely removed the statement concerning bringing it to the top of the agenda for evangelicals.<sup>329</sup> One potential reason for this could be that, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition onwards, the chapters on abortion and euthanasia were combined and therefore it might confuse the reader. However, the sentence also remains in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, where abortion and euthanasia are both mentioned. Therefore, for some reason, the sentence has been intentionally omitted from the 4<sup>th</sup> edition and appears to be no longer, for the editor at least, the primary issue for evangelicals.

### C. The Key Issue

Stott has sought to provide contemporary Christians with the reason that they should be concerned with this discussion – albeit seeking to justify why it should be at the top of their ‘list’. In the next section he enters into the intricacies of the discussion itself, analysing the opposing viewpoints of both the ‘pro-abortionists’ and those ‘who oppose easy abortion’. He notes that:

both begin their argument from opposite positions ... The Pro-abortionists emphasize the rights of the mother, and especially her right to choose; anti-abortionists emphasize the rights of the unborn child, and especially his or her right to live.<sup>330</sup>

Stott acknowledges that there are areas where the decision to abort may not be taken without due thought (such as a large demanding family, mother is the wage earner, unfit husband, the mother is single, adultery, rape, incest, ‘defective’ baby).<sup>331</sup> All these cases, he admits, ‘cause great personal suffering, and arouse our sincere Christian compassion’.<sup>332</sup> Yet he explains that Christians:

who desire to live under the authority of his [Jesus’] truth, justice and compassion, can never be pure pragmatists. We have to ask ourselves what principles are involved. Our compassion needs both theological and moral guidelines. If it is expressed at the expense of truth or justice, it ceases to genuine compassion.’<sup>333</sup>

As mentioned in the previous section, some overarching hermetical principle themes are on display here, such as truth, justice and compassion and the tension in how these principles relate. However,

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<sup>329</sup> Stott., John, *Issues Facing Christians Today: New perspectives on social & moral dilemmas*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1990, 308-335. 308. Stott., John, *Issues Facing Christians Today: Fully revised edition*, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000, 345-381. 345.

<sup>330</sup> Stott *Abortion*, 9.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid*.

before desiring to live under the authority of his truth, justice and compassion and asking what principles are involved, the Christian must first discover or be taught exactly what these principles are. This is a theological task, and without this framework these aspects could appear somewhat vague and open to much interpretation. For evangelicals, the word of God should be the first point of reference for discovering these principles.

Next, Stott affirms that the key issue within the whole discussion is the nature of the foetus. He highlights three differing positions:

Those who advocate that the foetus as just another part of the mother's body and that she has the right to do with it as she pleases.<sup>334</sup> Stott rejects this view and, with the inclusion of 'we', makes the following statement on behalf of evangelicals:

we reject as totally false and utterly abhorrent the notion that the foetus is merely a lump of jelly or blob of tissue, or a growth in the mother's womb, which may therefore be extracted and destroyed like teeth, tumours or tonsils ... her child has independent rights both before and after birth, and it is these rights which those young women in Whitehall did not acknowledge.<sup>335</sup>

There is no theological comment here from Stott other than 'that embryo, though carried within the mother's body, is nevertheless not a part of it, is not only a theological but physiological fact'.<sup>336</sup>

The second group he mentions are 'those who seek the decisive moment of the embryo's "humanization" at some point between conception and birth',<sup>337</sup> with the differing options of three or four days after fertilisation, 'quickening', viability or birth itself. The phrases Stott mentions here reflect the wider historical conversation regarding the status of the unborn. Throughout history many classical ethicists have arrived at varying positions on the status of the unborn, naturally effects their position on the issue of abortion itself.

From here Stott then enters into the theological discussion with Rex Gardner, a gynaecologist, who, in his book *Abortion: The Moral Dilemma*, notes that only when a child takes his first breath does God give the child 'not only life, but the offer of life',<sup>338</sup> citing Genesis 2:7 as scriptural evidence, when God breathed into the first human's nostrils 'the breath of life'. Stott rejects this view by highlighting that:

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<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid*, 11-12.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

Scripture usually speaks of 'new life' beginning at 'new birth'. Yet this does not settle the matter, since Scripture also speaks of God 'begetting' us and of the implanted 'seed' which leads to new birth.<sup>339</sup>

This is the first time Stott disagrees with another person trying to justify their position on theological grounds.

Finally, there is a third group who say conception is the moment when human life begins. Stott affirms that this group 'should include all Christians'.<sup>340</sup> He mentions that this is the official position of the Catholic Church as well as that of many Protestants. However, he admits:

although some find difficulty with the non-recognition of degree, yet similarly affirm that there is no point between conception and death at which we can say 'after that point I was a person, but before it I was not'.<sup>341</sup>

Here Stott admits that the Catholic Church has an 'official position', whereas for Protestants there appears to be no united consensus, even though Stott has noted earlier that this position should include 'all Christians'.

#### **D. An Implicit Evangelical Theological Method**

After acknowledging that abortion is a complex issue owing to numerous differing sources seeking to exert their authority into the discussion regarding the status of the embryo, Stott demonstrates, implicitly by way of a classic evangelical theological method, his primary authority in assessing the status of the embryo. He begins with scriptural revelation.

##### *i) Propositional Argument from Psalm 139*

Stott seeks to justify his position, as stated within the third group of people, by appealing to Scripture first. Although Scripture does not explicitly mention abortion, as Gorman notes, 'this can lead to certain erroneous or misguided claims ... that Scripture should have no role in the abortion debate'.<sup>342</sup>

However, Stott believes that Scripture does have something to say on the issue and begins with a method that reflects the propositional approach in the tradition of Hodge. He starts his 'investigation' from Psalm 139, which for him is 'the firmest foundation in Scripture for this view'.<sup>343</sup> It is here, Stott argues, that the psalmist, 'in the course of his meditation makes important statements about our

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<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>342</sup> Gorman, 'Abortion' 35.

<sup>343</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 14.

prenatal existence'.<sup>344</sup> However, he admits that, although 'it employs poetical imagery and highly figurative language [v15] ... nevertheless, the psalmist is affirming at least three important truths'.<sup>345</sup>

- Creation – Stott notes that 'the process of embryonic growth is neither haphazard nor even automatic, but a divine work of creative skill'.<sup>346</sup>
- Continuity – Stott notes that 'in and out of his mother's womb, before and after his birth, as embryo, baby, youth and adult, he is conscious of being the same person'.<sup>347</sup>
- Communion – Stott notes:  
what makes us a person, then, is not that we know God, but that he knows us; not that we love God but that he has set his love upon us. So each of us was already a person in our mother's womb, because already then God knew us and loved us.<sup>348</sup>

The conclusion of his study is thus:

It is these three words (Creation, Continuity and Communion or Covenant) which give us the essential biblical perspective from which to think. The foetus is neither a growth in the mother's body, nor even a potential human being, but already a human life who, though not yet mature, has the potentiality of growing into the fullness of the individual humanity he already possesses.<sup>349</sup>

## *ii) A Biblical Theology of the Acknowledgement of Prenatal Life*

After offering evidence from one specific text, Stott provides a condensed biblical theology for the acknowledgment of prenatal life, first from the Old Testament (Job 31:15, Ps. 22:9-10; 71:6; 119:73, Eccles. 11:15, Isa. 49:1-5, Jer. 1:5) and then from the New Testament (Luke 1:41, Eph. 1:4, 2 Tim. 1:9).<sup>350</sup> The understanding of the acknowledgement of the prenatal life is affirmed by other evangelical theologians, such as Davis, who notes, 'while the Bible nowhere offers a technical definition of personhood that might satisfy a philosopher, the Scriptures do assume a fundamental continuity between prenatal and postnatal human life'.<sup>351</sup> Davis adds that the case for the sanctity of prenatal life could be made from the testimony of the life of Jesus himself:

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<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid*, 14-15.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid*, 16-17.

<sup>351</sup> Davis, *Evangelical*, 150.

In the New Testament, the incarnation of Jesus Christ is a profound testimony to God's affirmation of the sanctity of prenatal life ... Jesus Christ recapitulated the full span of human existence – from conception through death – in order to fulfill the purposes of God ... His human history, like ours, began at conception. His conception was, of course, a supernatural one, but the significant point is that God chose to begin the process of incarnation there, rather than at some other point, thus affirming the significance of that starting point for human life.<sup>352</sup>

### iii) *Appeals to Secondary Sources*

After appealing to his primary authority in Scripture, in keeping with an evangelical theological method, not unlike that which was articulated in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, Stott appeals to his chosen secondary sources in seeking to confirm the biblical revelation. After starting with Scripture, he appeals to church tradition, medical science, photography and medical technology.

In appeals to church tradition, Stott writes:

that Christian tradition affirms of Jesus Christ in the Apostles' Creed that he was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, ... and on the third day he rose again' ... throughout these events, from beginning to end, Jesus was and is the very same Jesus who was conceived in the of his virgin mother.<sup>353</sup>

This point is affirmed by other evangelical theologians, such as Davis, who comments that 'early Christianity resolutely opposed abortion'.<sup>354</sup> Gorman adds, 'one significant aspect of the discussion is the witness of early Judaism and early Christianity against abortion'.<sup>355</sup>

In appealing to medical science, with the discovery of the genetic code, Stott writes, 'modern science appears to confirm this biblical teaching. It was only in the 1960's that the genetic code was unravelled'.<sup>356</sup> This discovery enabled Stott to state that 'we' *now* know that 'each human being begins as a single fertilized cell'.<sup>357</sup>

Next, Stott appeals to photography by making reference to the Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson's famous book, *A Child is Born*, where technological advancements have allowed him to take pictures of the unborn within the womb.<sup>358</sup> Nilsson's picture of a 'fetus' at 18 weeks became one of *Time's* top 100 photographs of all time.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> *Ibid*, 152.

<sup>353</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 17-18.

<sup>354</sup> Davis, *Evangelical*, 133,

<sup>355</sup> Gorman, 'Abortion', 36.

<sup>356</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 18.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>359</sup> Time, '100 Photos', *Time* website, (<http://100photos.time.com/photos/lennart-nilsson-fetus>)

Stott's final secondary source from which he has chosen to draw is medical technology. Advancements in medical technology have allowed the unborn gestation to be tracked at every level. Stott notes, 'at three to three and a half weeks the tiny hearts begin to beat ... by the end of the fifth month and beginning of the sixth ... the baby has hair, eyelashes, nails and nipples, and can cry, grip, punch and kick'.<sup>360</sup>

### **E. A 'Contemporary Christian Debate'**

After framing the discussion concerning the status of the human embryo and providing a biblical framework for how to assess the question by primarily appealing to Scripture and then to secondary sources, Stott admits that 'it would not be honest to claim that all Christians see eye to eye on this issue'.<sup>361</sup> This should not come as a surprise, as professing Christians tend not to see eye to eye on a number of issues. However, what is surprising is the fact that he adds, 'even all Christians who seek to submit to the authority of Scripture'.<sup>362</sup> This raises the possibility that there are differing positions to arrive at, even with those who have similar method to Stott's, once again highlighting the need for serious discussion regarding hermeneutical principles amongst UK evangelicals.

Nevertheless, Stott provides two Christians who have this 'difference of opinion' yet who both seek to submit to the authority of Scripture. The first is former Regis Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford, Canon Oliver O'Donovan. The second is former Director of the Research Department of Communication and Neuroscience at Keele University, Donald MacKay. Stott notes that this 'sharp difference of opinion surfaced at an interdisciplinary seminar of theologians and doctors' in 1983.<sup>363</sup> The following section contains an analysis of O'Donovan's and MacKay's positions as well as Stott's engagement. The aim of this analysis is to discover how Stott, as an evangelical, engages in the debate with two other leading voices in their field who also seek to submit to Scripture, as Stott does.

#### *i) O'Donovan's Position*

Concerning the question, what is the status of the embryo? unlike Stott, O'Donovan's starting point is not Psalm 139 but is rather based on one scriptural passage, the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Here, O'Donovan notes that 'Jesus declined to answer the question "and who is my neighbour?" by

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<sup>360</sup> *Ibid*, 18-19.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid*.



providing a set of criteria', and therefore notes that 'there are no criteria (whether self-consciousness or reason or responsive love) by which to decide who is a 'person'.<sup>364</sup> He writes that Jesus gave no list to the expert in the law as to how to identify a person as a neighbour. Rather the 'Good Samaritan identified his neighbour by caring for him, since, for O'Donovan, the 'the truth of neighbourhood is known in engagement'.<sup>365</sup> He elaborates:

we come to recognise someone as a person 'only from a stance of prior moral commitment to treat him or her as a person'. Then later we come to know him or her as a person, as he or she is disclosed to us in personal relationships. It is not that personhood is conferred on someone by our resolve to treat him as a person, but that personhood is disclosed that way.<sup>366</sup>

Therefore, personhood is not granted to someone by *our* action to treat them as a person, but personhood is *revealed* that way. Personhood becomes visible in personal relationships, although it is not established by them. Gorman, commentating on the use of the good Samaritan in the discussion surrounding abortion, adds some more clarity:

Jesus transforms the question about the identity of the neighbor into a summons to actually be a neighbor. Analogously, the contemporary question of the personhood ('neighbor-hood') of the embryo/fetus should perhaps be reconstituted first of all as a question about the meaning of being a neighbor to the other(s) in need, both those already born and those not yet born.<sup>367</sup>

However, the question remains, is it only someone deciding to treat another human being as a 'person' that makes them a person? O' Donovan anticipates this question:

before we commit ourselves to the service of a person, it is right to look for evidence that it is appropriate to do so, either by appearance (or in the case of a foetus) by our scientific knowledge of its unique genotype'.<sup>368</sup>

He moves on to list three stages of evidence: there must be recognition – recognising someone as a person, commitment – caring for them as a person, and finally encounter – those we treat as persons when they are yet unborn become known to us as persons when they are children'. For Stott, 'these three stages acknowledge the gradualness of development into personal encounter, while affirming the reality of personhood from the moment of conception'.<sup>370</sup>

In summary, O'Donovan has articulated his position of opting to define a person in the relational context, which allows for personhood to exist within the womb. However, the position put forward

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<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>367</sup> Gorman, 'Abortion', 36.

<sup>368</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 20.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

appears contradictory, as O'Donovan rejects providing a set of criteria originally, yet goes on to do the very same thing in providing evidence as to how to commit ourselves to the service of a person. Although he arrives at the same conclusion as Stott, hence Stott's affirmation, the method appears somewhat peculiar.

ii) *MacKay's Position*

Stott cites Donald MacKay who, in his 1977 London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity, criticised the language of 'potentiality', stating that although the foetus has potential to 'reach the end product', this does not justify 'ontological assertions about earlier stages'.<sup>371</sup> The example provided is how:

various components will become a car, if they are assembled properly, by we do not refer to them as a 'potential car', because they might instead end up on the scrapheap ... potential language ... is to imagine that all the attributes and rights of the end product already belong to the beginning. They do not, even if there is a direct line of continuity between the two.<sup>372</sup>

MacKay adds that 'before the foetus may rightly be considered a "conscious personal agency", there are certain information-processing requirements which are necessary for human self-supervision'.<sup>373</sup> He notes:

'On the one hand, the fertilised ovum is a 'physical structure with the richest and most strangely mysterious repertoire known to man, for it can develop into 'the embodiment of a new human being in the image of God, loved by God, replete with potentialities of not merely earthly but eternal significance ... to treat it as 'a person with the rights of a person' is a conspicuous example of 'thin-end-of-the wedgery'.<sup>374</sup>

iii) *Stott's Comments*

Stott's chooses, again displaying an evangelical theological method, to return the discussion to Scripture:

this bring me back to Psalm 139 and to the reason for the psalmist's sense of continuity of being, namely God's steadfast love'. Indeed, it is God's loving, personal commitment to the unborn child which makes me uncomfortable with Donald MacKay's non-personal analogies.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid*, 20-21.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

Stott seeks to affirm that, in spite of MacKay's attempts to provide status to the embryo from its development, 'it is, in fact, God's grace which confers on the unborn child, from the moment of its conception, both unique status which it already enjoys and unique destiny which it will later inherit'.<sup>376</sup>

iv) *Evaluation of the 'Contemporary Debate'*

Overall, this debate demonstrates that Christians who seek to submit to Scripture, as Stott points out at the beginning of the discussion, can arrive at differing positions concerning the status of the embryo, and therefore the issue of abortion becomes more complex. By writing, 'seeking to submit to Scripture', the reader may understand that these two individuals are following the same method in arriving at their conclusions. However, it must be noted that 'seeking to submit to Scripture' does not necessarily equate with seeking *primarily* to submit to Scripture. This is the real reason for the divergence of perspectives. This highlights the danger of not discussing method before entering into the discussion surrounding any ethical perspective, in this case the issue of abortion. Although Stott demonstrates his method implicitly, as has already been demonstrated, he does not acknowledge it before entering into the discussion.

Further research of MacKay's writings reveal that he does not appear to start primarily with Scripture within his analysis of the status of the human being. In his 1979 book *Human Science and Human Dignity*, there is a chapter entitled 'Man in a Scientific Mirror'. It is throughout this chapter that he reveals his theory of 'hierarchy of levels'<sup>377</sup> relating to the status of a human being. Through this hierarchy, he comes to the conclusion that these 'categories of explanation ... do justice to the richness of the nature of man'.<sup>378</sup> As an example, he uses the following analogy:

if it is true that a computer is solving a mathematical problem (higher level), it must also be true that corresponding currents are flowing through some of its wires (lower level); but not all flows of current through the wires of a computer signify the solving of a problem. Similarly, in brain science we assume as a working hypothesis that whenever a human being has a conscious experience (higher level), some corresponding physical activity takes place in his brain (lower level); but not all brain activity is associated with conscious experience.<sup>379</sup>

Therefore, it is this theory of higher and lower levels that MacKay applies to his understanding of the status of the embryo and therefore his position regarding the topic of abortion. For example:

If (as I do) you take the view that an embryo becomes a 'living human soul only after it reaches a certain element of characteristically human brain organization, you will not be able to dodge this question simply by quoting the Sixth

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<sup>376</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>377</sup> MacKay, Donald M., *Human Science and Human Dignity*, Kent: Hodder And Stoughton, 1979. 28.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid*.

Commandment. It would then seem hard to deny that such knowledge ought to be used at least to reduce the number of children born with mongolism and other dreadful effects.<sup>380</sup>

Furthermore, maybe concerning for some is that even when approaching the topic of gender-selective pregnancies, MacKay struggles to provide a conclusive position:

How much farther then should we go? If parents want a boy rather than a girl, should they be given the information and the means to destroy an embryo merely because it turns out to be of the wrong sex? I do not believe that such questions have answers ready-made in the Bible or anywhere else; but I think it vital that Christians seek to bring biblical priorities to bear on the effort to answer them wisely.<sup>381</sup>

In summary, for MacKay, in seeking to answer the question of the status of the human embryo is his primary understanding of 'man in a scientific mirror', and it is from this lens that he interprets Scripture. Therefore, the difference in opinion is actually rooted in difference of methodology. However much he 'seeks' to submit to Scripture, Scripture is seemingly not primary but dialogical.

Likewise, similar could potentially be said of O'Donovan. Although he reaches the same conclusion as Stott, a conclusion of which Stott approves, he potentially has a rather different methodology. Evidence for this could be made when analysing his statement further, he writes, 'it is right to look for evidence that it is appropriate to do so, either by appearance (or in the case of a foetus) by our scientific knowledge of its unique genotype'. Before committing yourself to recognising a foetus as a person you must primarily acknowledge the 'scientific knowledge of its unique genotype'. Methodologically, this acquiring of scientific knowledge appears primary in O'Donovan's ability to assess the status of the embryo, and then, through this lens, Scripture is assessed.

Therefore, once again, the differing viewpoints within this 'contemporary Christian debate' appear to be caused by differing methods and primacy of authority that are brought to bear on the discussion. Stott's evangelical theological method, outlined earlier, ensures that it is not essential for Christians to understand neuroscience to be able to assert or not when human life begins: primarily, evangelicals need only to read Scripture. Again, secondary sources of authority provide further evidence and are helpful, as demonstrated by Stott's method, yet he is eager to reply, 'this bring me back to Psalm 139'. In other words, let us return to Scripture.

What must be noted, once again, is that in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Issues*, the whole discussion concerning O'Donovan and MacKay has been left out.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> *Ibid*, 64-65.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

<sup>382</sup> Stott, *Issues* (4th Edition), 405.

## F. Stott's Implications and Conclusions

Finally, Stott offers implications and draws conclusions from the discussion. He provides these in three specific areas. First, how the uniqueness of the unborn should affect the perspective of contemporary Christians on abortion. Second, he seeks to answer the question, is abortion ever justified? Finally, what should the response of contemporary Christians be?

### i) *How the Uniqueness of the Unborn should Affect the Perspective of Contemporary Christians on Abortion*

Stott acknowledges that Christians have to change their attitudes to realise that, when considering the abortion topic, two lives are in discussion – not only the life of the mother –<sup>383</sup> and that Christians should afford ‘extra care before birth’<sup>384</sup> to the child as ‘the bible has much to say about God’s concern for the defenceless’.<sup>385</sup> He concludes that, for these reasons, ‘all Christians should therefore be able to agree that the human foetus is in principle inviolable’.<sup>386</sup>

Therefore, it is this attitude and principle of inviolability that should make the method of abortion abhorrent to the contemporary Christian. As Stott notes, it is ‘this combination of what the human foetus already is and one day could be which makes the realities of abortion so horrific’.<sup>387</sup>

Stott also appeals to the rhetoric surrounding the abortion discussion and calls Christians to expose abortion for what it is: a termination not of a pregnancy but of a child’s life.<sup>388</sup> He concludes, ‘we need to have the courage to use accurate language. Induced abortion is foeticide, the deliberate destruction of an unborn child, the shedding of innocent blood.’<sup>389</sup>

### ii) *Seeking to Answer the Question, Is Abortion Ever Justified?*

Before answering this question, Stott calls for more dialogue between disciplines, specifically between theologians and doctors, highlighting the frustrations that occur when communication does not exist:

doctors are understandably impatient with theologians because they tend to be impractical, making ivory tower pronouncements unrelated to painful clinical dilemmas. Theologians, on the other hand, are understandably

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<sup>383</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 23.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

impatient with doctors because they tend to be pragmatists, making clinical decisions uncontrolled by theological principle.<sup>390</sup>

Stott attempts to model this interdisciplinary consultation as he affirms the argument of fellow Anglican Priest and significant contributor to medical ethics,<sup>391</sup> Professor G.R. Dunstan, of 'justifiable homicide'. Stott notes that Dunstan 'is probably right that there is an ethic of "justifiable foeticide", by analogy with "justifiable homicide"'.<sup>392</sup> However, this is another example of Stott referring to individuals who may have different methods of arriving at their conclusions. For example, in his book, *The Artifice of Ethics*, there is an indication that Dunstan held somewhat less-than-classical evangelical views on the inspiration. For example, concerning ethics in Scripture, he wrote, 'St. Matthew appears to have written the rules of his church – the source of his tradition – into the words of Jesus'.<sup>393</sup> This may explain Stott's caution with the phrase 'probably right'. However, this actually demonstrates the tension and potential danger with interdisciplinary consultation and how it must be approached with caution.

Finally, in seeking to answer the question, is abortion ever justified, Stott concludes, 'if we accept the general inviolability of the human foetus, then every exception has to be rigorously and specifically argued'.<sup>394</sup> He then lists three objections to those who would seek to abort the life of the severely handicapped, dispelling the quality-of-life argument:

It is love which gives quality to life and makes it worth living, and it is we – their neighbours – who can choose whether to give love to the handicapped or withhold it. The quality of their life is in our hands.<sup>395</sup>

This section contained many updates in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Issues*, with much more depth added to the procedure itself. For example, he highlights the different techniques used, including vacuum aspiration, dilation and curettage (D and C), injection of saline, dilation and extraction (D and X), and also the RU486 abortion drug.<sup>396</sup>

Finally, Stott dispels the logic that if a handicapped child may be destroyed before birth, why not after:

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<sup>390</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>391</sup> Journal of Medical Ethics, 'Obituary: Professor the Reverend Canon G R Dunstan CBE, MA HonDD HonLLD FSA HonFRCP FRCOG HonFRCGP HonFRCPCCH,' *BMJ Journals* website, (October 2018, <https://jme.bmj.com/content/30/2/233>).

<sup>392</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 25.

<sup>393</sup> Dunstan, G.R., *The Artifice of Ethics*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1974. 29.

<sup>394</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 25.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid*, 26-27.

<sup>396</sup> Stott, *Abortion* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), 367-370.

The solemn fact is that if society is prepared to kill an unborn child on the sole ground that it will be handicapped, there is no logical reason why we should not go on to kill the deformed newborn, the comatose victim of a car crash, the imbecile and the senile.<sup>397</sup>

He concludes that to abort the severely handicapped 'would be for fallible mortals to play God',<sup>398</sup> and that 'Christians must remember that the God of the Bible has expressed his special protective care for the handicapped and weak'.<sup>399</sup>

### *iii) The Response of Contemporary Christianity*

In conclusion, Stott lists three areas where contemporary Christianity should seek to be active: repentance, accepting full responsibility for the effects of a tighter abortion policy, and supporting a positive educational and social campaign.<sup>400</sup>

The question remains, how has the evangelical church, including leaders, local church pastors and congregants, repented, accepted responsibility and supported a positive educational and social campaign? Stott notes:

'Christians must not be shy to teach thoroughly and constantly the biblical understanding of humanness and of the value, indeed the sacredness, of human life'.<sup>401</sup>

Finally, Stott appeals, as a 'good evangelical', to the gospel itself, acknowledging that the root cause of the issue is sin, with the main antidote being the gospel of Jesus Christ:

More important in the end than either social education or social action, vital as they both are, is the good news of Jesus Christ. He came to bind up the broken-hearted and support the weak. He calls us to treat all human life with reverence, whether in the unborn, the infant, the handicapped or the senile.<sup>402</sup>

## **conclusion**

To conclude, prior to the engagement with Stott, the lack of discussion regarding evangelical ethical method appears symptomatic of the lack of discussion regarding evangelical theological method in general. Although Stott never explicitly mentions his method, he consistently maintains it throughout. As evident in the Wesleyan model, Stott prioritises engagement with Scripture over other sources. Likewise, he adopts the propositional approach in formulating a biblical perspective on the status of the unborn, which is foundational to his overall perspective on abortion. Even when disagreeing with

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<sup>397</sup> Stott, *Abortion*, 27.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid*, 28-30.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

those with whom he is in dialogue, his first response is to bring the discussion back to Scripture. For these reasons, Stott demonstrates a classical evangelical approach to the topic of abortion.

The 'contemporary Christian debate' especially raises some very insightful observations. As Stott dialogues with the persons involved, what becomes apparent is foundationally a problem with method. With the other individuals, secondary sources are elevated either alongside or above the priority of Scripture, which leads to conflicting perspectives even though Scripture is referenced and revered to some extent. This, for evangelicals who are unaware of the difference in methodology, can create confusion and adds to the complexity of the discussion overall.

The word 'complex' seems to be the go-to adjective for evangelicals when describing the topic of abortion.<sup>403</sup> This may be a reason for the silence overall, as leaders may opt out of the discussion because of this problem. Although this complexity still exists and is becoming more evident now with the added discussion surrounding hermeneutical approaches, as Stott himself notes, it calls for courageous leadership. He himself is a great example; whilst he admits to not being an expert, he should be commended for his attempt, at the very least. This reflects the situation regarding leadership as also demonstrated in chapter 2, as this is still what appears to be lacking even for contemporary evangelicalism: evangelical leaders unwilling to discuss the issue, hence the silence overall.

The final key observation is Stott calling for the issue to be at the top of evangelicals' agenda. However, somewhere between 1984 and 2011 this changed somewhat dramatically, as demonstrated by the EA research. At the time of his writing, Stott noted that evangelicals should repent, accept full responsibility for the effects of a tighter abortion policy and support a positive educational and social campaign (whether this has been successful will be touched on in the following chapter). Now this response may have been the case in 1984; however, based on the results from chapter 1, it also appears that these educational campaigns need to be run within the churches themselves. As Gorman states, 'Because recent discussion of abortion, even in the church, has almost universally considered it a political issue addressed within the framework of rights, the first task of Christian ethics is to make the question a truly theological and ecclesial one.'<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> As demonstrated earlier in the section, Stott opens his whole discussion on abortion stating that it is a 'complex' issue.

<sup>404</sup> Gorman, 'Abortion', 35.



## **Chapter 4: Evangelical Activism and the Topic of Abortion**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter demonstrated how evangelical theology engaged theoretically with the topic of abortion, looking at a contemporary debate. The conclusion of the following chapter was the notable lack of engagement at the ecclesial level with the topic of abortion.

What has potentially been lacking within the discussion surrounding abortion is verifiable statistics concerning UK evangelicals, meaning that the discussion may rely too heavily upon theoretical speculation. Therefore, having both empirical and theoretical research could provide a much clearer insight when evaluating the extent of the silence. The aim of the following chapter is to provide some empirical research concerning abortion and the evangelical church in the UK.

#### **a) Empirical Research Focus: The Evangelical Alliance**

Unfortunately, statistics regarding abortion and UK. evangelicalism are, as far as the researcher is aware, non-existent, except for the figures detailed from the EA in chapter 2. The primary goal of this chapter is to provide an empirical indication of the extent of the silence on abortion with regard to UK evangelicalism. The first task of the empirical research was to discover a researchable partner. As discussed in the previous chapter, rather than being one united, organised body, evangelicalism in the UK is a theological movement, with adherents located within many different denominational institutions. Again, as stated in the previous chapter, whilst there is no united evangelical body or recognisable institution within the UK, an organisation that exists which can potentially provide some verifiable indicators is the Evangelical Alliance. The EA is an independent organised body that claims to represent more than 2 million evangelicals in the UK. Therefore, as well as being the largest independent representative body in the UK, the EA provides a wealth of verifiable and quantifiable data spanning just over 170 years. UK church historian Ian Randall highlights this sentiment, as he wrote in 2001, 'it has become clear that the development of the Alliance over the last 155 years represents a fascinating and important of wider theological, ecclesiastical and cultural developments'.<sup>405</sup> Therefore, owing to its history and broad impact on UK evangelicalism, the EA provides a more than suitable research partner for the empirical stage of this research.

#### **b) Key Statistic**

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<sup>405</sup> Randall, Ian & David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance*, Carlisle: Paternoster Publishing, 2001. vii.

As discussed in chapter 2, in 2010 the EA conducted a research initiative with the aim, as General Director Steve Clifford states, 'to produce a snapshot of the beliefs and practices of evangelical Christians in the UK'.<sup>406</sup> In 2011 the results were released. These results were covered more comprehensively in chapter 2.

## **2. Empirical Research**

The EA has been chosen as the main research subject by which to gather the empirical research evidence. Although the EA's *raison d'être* may not be exactly simultaneous to that of the local evangelical church, in that it entails more of a representative and advocacy role, it is still a credible candidate in potentially offering an invaluable perspective on the issue of abortion within evangelicalism in the UK. Potentially, its documents could offer insights as to what extent the organisation and evangelicalism more broadly have been engaged with the issue. Therefore, the main objective of the empirical research is to analyse all the relevant documents it possesses regarding abortion.

### **a) Research Method**

The following section outlines the exact research method to be implemented concerning the areas discussed in the introduction. In order to meet the high standards of the academic community, this method intends to offer a meticulous and transparent approach throughout the whole process.<sup>407</sup> There were four main areas covered in the research method: i) data collection, ii) data types, iii) limitations, and iv) data findings (results).<sup>408</sup>

#### *i) Data Collection*

The decision was made only to include information that the EA had previously made public. Being public knowledge, the information adds credibility, in that opportunities are available for the information to be verified or even updated if more articles surface in the future. Also, if the research contained private documents, the results of the analysis would be severely restricted as the research could not be fully disclosed.

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<sup>406</sup> Clifford, Steve, 'Foreword,' in Greg Smith (eds), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals: Reflections On Research By The Evangelical Alliance*, Herts: Instant Apostle, 2015, 11-12. 11.

<sup>407</sup> Biggam, John, *Succeeding with your Master's Dissertation: A step-by-step handbook*, Berkshire: Open University Press, 2015. 150.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

The data was collected from three specific fields:

1. The EA's internal 'search the library' system;
2. A personal search of EA documents within the onsite library;
3. A search of the EA website. For example, typing the key word 'abortion' into the web search option.

1. The EA's internal 'search the library' system.

For EA employees, the main way to locate historical information published by the organisation is through accessing the EA's own internal system, called 'search the library system'. The reason this was the first stage in this research was for the researcher to become familiar with the EA library itself. To access all the articles on abortion, the key word 'abortion' was typed into the search option. A total of 26 articles appeared, two of which could not be found (Jim Dobbin, 'Life Matters', and London: Evangelical Alliance, 1998, United Nations conferences: ideological battleground). As will be mentioned in the limitations section, the 'search the library system' catalogue of data only begins in January 1965, therefore the date radius on the 26 articles was from January 1967 to October 2017.

After each article was located, it was logged into a database under seven different headings:

1. Record Number;
2. EA Library Location;
3. Data Type Code;
4. Date;
5. Author;
6. Title of Article;
7. Photo Availability.

For example:

1. Record Number – 14;
2. EA Library Location – Archive Box 262;
3. Data Type Code – 1;
4. Date – November/December 2008;
5. Author – EA Editorial;
6. Title of Article – Abortion Law;

## 7. Photo Availability – Yes.

This process was repeated for all the 24 articles found.

### 2. A personal search of EA documents within the onsite library

The second process of data collection was to search for articles containing the word ‘abortion’ that existed outside the ‘search the library system’. Owing to the information via the system only being available from 1965 onwards, in order for the research to be as thorough as possible, a manual search was conducted of all the information available in the EA library. Owing to time constraints, a decision was made to set parameters on the data-collection process. Therefore, the timescale set to discover articles on abortion was between 1900 and 2017. A search consisted of thorough investigations into all the available editions of subscription and journal publications, the first of which was *Evangelical Christendom*. From 1847 to 1954, the EA kept a journal which consisted of news, comment, letters and in-depth theological writing. Randall notes that *Evangelical Christendom* ‘is a rich, extensive resource that has hitherto remained largely unexplored!! It offers fascinating perspectives, not only on modern evangelicalism, but also on nineteenth- and twentieth-century church history as a whole.’<sup>409</sup>

Second, *Crusade* was also searched thoroughly for articles containing the word ‘abortion’ and related derivatives. *Crusade* was an evangelical periodical that was apparently directly produced by the EA from 1955 to 1980 and featured many EA writers and articles. Randall adds that *Crusade* offered ‘substantial insight into the agenda and ethos of the organisation during this period’.<sup>410</sup>

The third publication to be researched was *Idea Magazine*, which is the current subscription magazine released bi-monthly by the organisation. The website states that *Idea*:

keeps members up to date with what evangelical Christians around the UK are doing to make Jesus known and provides a platform for us to share solutions to some of the challenges we face ... Underpinned by theological reflections written by Bible college principals and Christian leaders, and enhanced by stories of how churches, individuals and organisations are living out what God’s word says, *Idea* is as much a source of encouragement as it is a handy resource.

Finally, searches of available conference Information and press releases were also searched thoroughly. There were none that explicitly mentioned abortion, other than 3 press releases dated 13<sup>th</sup> September 1990, 26<sup>th</sup> September 1990 and 15<sup>th</sup> September 1992.

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<sup>409</sup> Randall, *One*, 14.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

3. A search of the EA website. For example, typing the key word 'abortion' into the web search option.

The final process of data collection was by typing 'abortion' into the EA website and seeing what articles appeared. Thirteen articles became available, with dates ranging from May 2010 to August 2017.

Another six articles appeared randomly whilst the researcher was browsing the site. Although the subject of these articles was abortion, they did not appear as results in the initial search. This raises the question as to whether there may be some articles 'lost' within the system itself which, unfortunately, may not be used in the research.

#### *ii) Data Types*

In total there were 8 different types of data searched for containing the word 'abortion':

1. *Idea Magazine;*
2. *Westminster Watch;*
3. *Crusade Magazine;*
4. *Evangelical Christendom;*
5. Press releases;
6. Conferences;
7. *Briefing: Christian Perspectives on Public Affairs;*
8. Website;
9. Surveys and reports.

#### *iii) Limitations of the Research*

In order to provide transparency throughout the whole research method, the limitations that arose in the research were logged and documented. The following section is a detailed account of these limitations.

##### **1. Lack of cataloguing**

As discussed briefly above, whilst undertaking the research at the EA it became apparent that the 'online library search' contained articles only from 1965 onwards. However, within the library itself there were documents on the shelves from before that date. This meant that a manual search through every single article within the library prior to 1965 had to take place in order to have thorough and robust data overall. Owing to time constraints, the decision was made to narrow this search from 1900

to 2017. A total of 26 articles appeared, two of which could not be found (Jim, Dobbin, 'Life Matters', and London: Evangelical Alliance, 1998, United Nations conferences: ideological battleground).

## 2. EA Bias

The articles themselves will likely have a bias concerning the EA's vision and overall mission. Therefore, the content may not necessarily directly translate into measuring the extent of the silence amongst contemporary evangelicalism on the topic of abortion. Again, the aim of this empirical research is to provide indications as to the extent of the silence.

## 3. Length of Articles

Certain articles are larger than others in relation to word count; therefore, in certain articles there may be more key word groups than others. In some articles there may be an excessive use of words because the article is only referring to the topic of abortion rather than it being the main point. For example, in one article the specific topic may be counselling. Therefore, there may be an overemphasis on the word, which results in its frequency of appearance rather than representing the amount of time and the importance of the key word itself.

## 4. No Social Media

Although the articles included in the research are public documents, the decision was made to omit any social media notifications sent out by the EA, such as those on Twitter and Facebook. The reason for this was purely time constraints, as it would take considerable time to search through all the social media releases by the EA. However, this would potentially be a valuable task for future research.

## 5. Natural Human Error

Natural human error also has to be accounted for, as the research was conducted by one person and may result in missing a key result or a key word. One discrepancy was identified, where an article located on the website stated that it was written on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014, whereas the article itself relates to a briefing that happened in 2016. The decision was made to include it still within the overall results as it does not directly affect any of the data presented by the charts.

## **B. Empirical Research Results**

This section contains the results of the empirical research conducted at the Evangelical Alliance. The results are provided in a series of charts and graphs, with general observations and concluding remarks provided for each result. In no way do these charts seek to be exhaustive regarding the extent to which

the data has potential to reveal, acknowledging, no doubt, that there may be plenty of other significant observations that could be made.

As stated in the data collection process, a total of 46 articles were found within the EA archive that had mention of the key word 'abortion'. These 46 articles were provided by a variety of data source types, nine in total (*Idea Magazine*, *Westminster Watch*, *Crusade Magazine*, *Evangelical Christendom*, Press releases, conferences, *Briefing: Christian Perspectives on Public Affairs*, website, surveys and reports). Articles containing the word 'abortion' appeared in only six of the data sources:

- *Idea Magazine* – 14 Articles;
- *Westminster Watch* – 7 Articles;
- *Crusade Magazine* – 3 Articles;
- Press releases – 3 Articles;
- Website articles – 15 Articles;
- Surveys + Reports – 4 Articles;
- *Evangelical Christendom* – 0 Articles;
- Conference papers – 0 Articles;
- *Briefing: Christian Perspectives on Public Affairs* – 0 Articles.

i) *Primary Key Word Group*

Once an article was located, a search of the article was conducted, with two specific tasks: 1. Search for the primary key word group; 2. Search for the secondary key word groups.

The primary key word that was searched for within the articles was always 'abortion'. However, three articles, although not containing the word 'abortion' as a noun, contained a similar derivative of that word. For example, the verb 'abort' appears in a *Westminster Watch* article, entitled 'Call for Closure of London Gender Clinic', where the noun 'abortion' does not. The decision was made to accompany all the grammatical derivatives under the one key word group 'abortion'.

The decision was made not to include articles where the primary key word was not found, even if an article contained an implicit reference to the discussion. For example, in an article featured on the EA website dated 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 written by David Smyth called 'Both Lives Matter', the word abortion did not appear. The reason for omitting these articles is the level of subjectivity and interpretive preference that may be enforced on to the research.

## *ii) Secondary Key Word Groups*

The next task, after identifying the primary key word group, was to identify the secondary key words within the articles. The aim of this task was to identify the prominent terminology and themes discussed around the topic. For example, a *Westminster Watch* article from 1996 contains the word 'women', and in 2013 a website article contains the word 'womans'. In graph one, when seeking to identify the overall terms within the abortion articles spanning from 1900 to 2017, these two words would be found under the one word group 'WG-Women'. This process has been repeated in other charts. The reason for this is that it provides more of a comprehensive account of the subsequent key words within the articles.

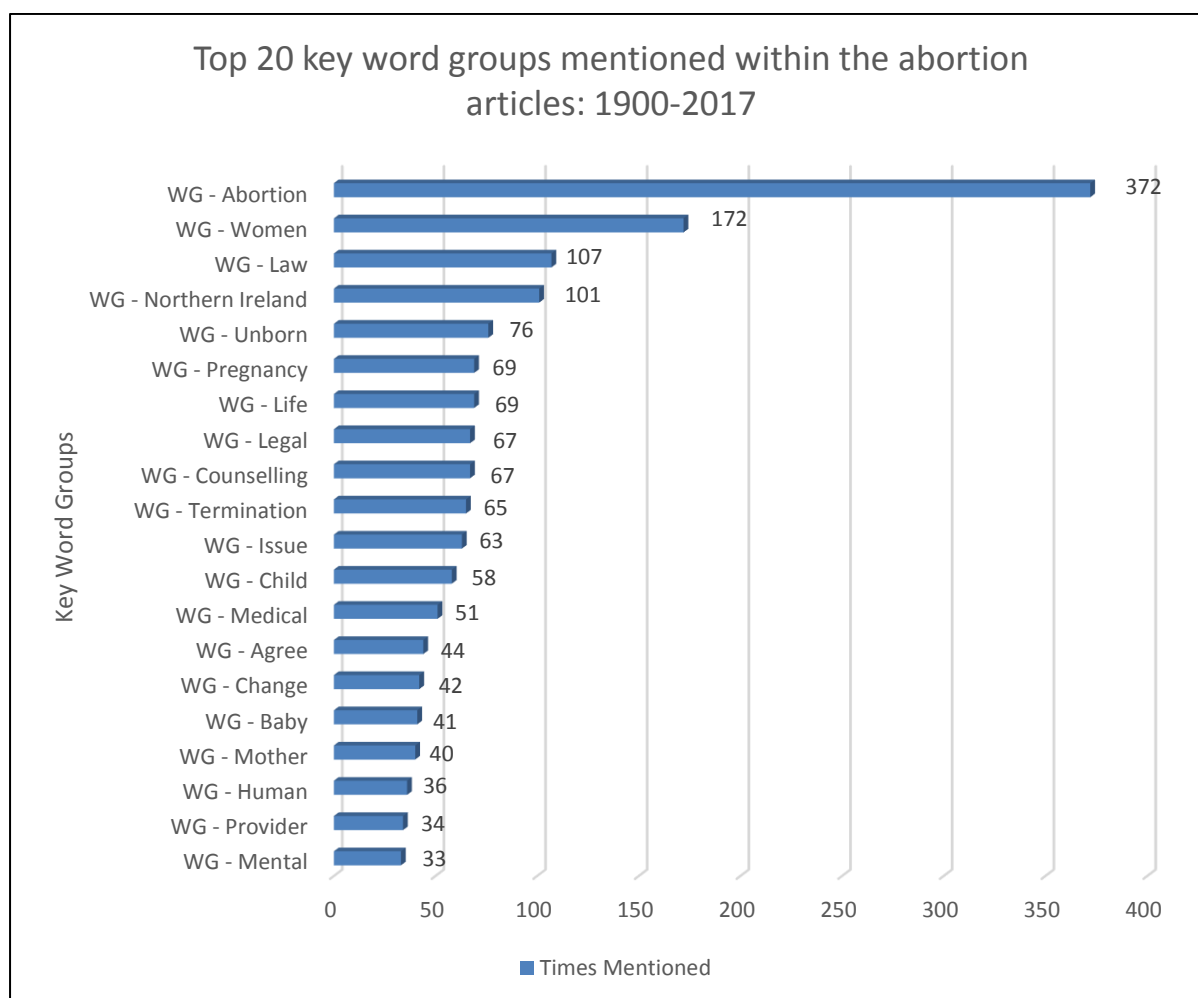
There is also an acknowledgment that a certain level of interpretation as to the words identified as secondary key word groups has taken place and that potentially others may interpret those words as not being within a certain word group. This needs to be considered when evaluating the results.

## **C. Results: Data**

The following section contains 12 charts demonstrating the results from the empirical research conducted at the EA head office. Each chart, if necessary, contains a key-word breakdown. For example, if a result states 'WG' before a term, this means there may be a group of terms under one key word. For example, 'WG-Law', whilst containing the singular word 'Law', also contains derivatives such as Law / Lawful / Laws / Lawfulness. This process has been repeated, for the reason stated earlier in the section.



## 1. Key terms within the overall abortion articles (1900–2017)



From the 46 articles containing the word ‘abortion’ or other derivative terms, the chart above demonstrates the overall top 20 key word groups within the articles. The reason for this chart is to evaluate the key themes and terminology associated with abortion overall, according to the EA.

### i) *Key Word Breakdowns*

- Word group ‘WG-Abortion’ contains the following words:  
 Abortion / Abort / Aborted / Abortificant Drugs / Aborting / Abortion / Abortion Act / Abortion Bill / Abortion Decision / Abortion Device / Abortion Law / Abortion on Demand / Abortion Practices / Abortion Providers / Abortion Services / Abortion Statistics / Abortions / Abortive / Abortifacients / Backstreet Abortions / Back-street Abortion / Legalise Abortion / Pro-Abortion / Pro-Abortion Group / Evils of Abortion / Limited ‘Social’ Abortion / Mass Abortions / Past Abortions / Post-Abortion Syndrome / UK Government Figures For Abortion / John Corrie’s Abortion Amendment Act / National Abortion And Reproductive Right's League / National Abortion Campaign.

The only words left out of this word group, although they contain the word ‘abortion’, are those that belong to the category surrounding the 1967 Abortion Act (such as 1967 Abortion Act / 1967 Abortion Act / 1967 Abortion Bill / 1967 Act). The choice was made to have a whole word group by itself.

- Word group 'WG-Women' contains the following words:  
Woman / Woman Consent / Womans / Woman's Consent / Womans Life / Woman's Life / Woman's Mental Health / Woman's Right / Women / Women in Crisis / Women's Income / Women's Right / Womens Rights / Women's Rights / Women's Rights.
- Word group 'WG-Law' contains the following words:  
Law / Lawful / Laws / Lawfulness.
- Word group 'WG-Northern Ireland' contains the following words:  
NI / NI Legal Framework / Northern Ireland / Northern Ireland Assembly / Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission / Northern Ireland Section / Northern Ireland's / Northern Irish / Northern Irish Politicians / Northern Ireland.
- Word group 'WG-Unborn' contains the following words:  
Unborn / Unborn Baby / Unborn British Children / Unborn Child / Unborn Children.
- Word group 'WG-Life' contains the following words:  
Life / Lives.
- Word group 'WG-Pregnancy' contains the following words:  
Pregnancy / Pregnancies / Pregnancy Crisis / Pregnancy Crisis Care / Pregnancy Crisis Centres / Pregnant / Pregnant Women.
- Word group 'WG-Counselling' contains the following words:  
Counselling / Counselling Group / Counselling Organisations / Counselling Provider / Counselling Service / Counselling Services / Counselling Women / Counsellor / Counsellors / Crisis Counselling / Independent Counselling.
- Word group 'WG-Legal' contains the following words:  
Legal / Legal Change / Legal Duty / Legal Issues / Legal Person / Legal Position / Legal Protection / Legal Reasons / Legal Safeguards / Legal Situation / Legal Tendencies / Legal Training / Legalise / Legalise / Legalised / Legalising / Legality / Legally / Legally Binding / Legally Binding Statutory Instrument / Legally Disadvantaged Class / Legally Enforceable / Legislate / Legislation.
- Word group 'WG-Terminations' contains the following words:  
Terminate / Terminated / Terminates / Termination / Terminations.
- Word group 'WG-Issue' contains the following words:  
Issue / Issued / Issues.
- Word group 'WG-Child' contains the following words:  
Child / Children / Children's.

- Word group 'WG-Medical' contains the following words:  
Medical / Medical Advances / Medical Bodies / Medical Care / Medical Community / Medical Condition/s / Medical Decision / Medical Evidence / Medical Information / Medical Necessity / Medical Practitioner/s / Medical Profession / Medical Professionals / Medical Reasons / Medical Situations / Medical Staff / Medical Termination / Medical Training / Medical Waste / Medically / Medically Sound / Medicine.
- Word group 'WG-Agree' contains the following words:  
Agree / Agreed / Agreement.
- Word group 'WG-Change' contains the following words:  
Change / Changed / Changes / Changing.
- Word group 'WG-Baby' contains the following words:  
Babies / Baby / Baby Girls / Baby's.
- Word group 'WG-Mother' contains the following words:  
Mother / Mother's Health / Mother's Life / Mother's Womb.
- Word group 'WG-Human' contains the following words:  
Human / Human Being / Human Beings / Human Body / Humane / Humanised / Humanity / Humans.
- Word group 'WG-Provider' contains the following words:  
Provide / Provided / Provider / Providers / Provides / Providing.
- Word group 'WG-Mental' contains the following words:  
Mental / Mental Health / Mental Health Assessment / Mental Health Care / Mental Health Problems / Mental Handicapped / Mentally.

## ii) *Chart Observations*

Naturally, at the top of the list is the primary key word group 'abortion'. The secondary word groups, however, offer insight into the other top occurring themes and terminology mentioned within the articles where the topic of abortion appears.

The secondary key word groups show a variety of different key themes and terminology. One category of terminology is anthropologically demonstrated by word groups such as, WG-Women, WG-Unborn, WG-Life, WG-Child, WG-Baby, WG-Mother and WG-Human. The judicial and legal (WG-Law and WG-Legal) themes are represented in the top 20. The medical theme appears with the specific word group

‘medical’; however, you could include WG-Termination, WG-Mental and WG-Counselling within that category.

The position of WG-Northern Ireland will be analysed in a later section. However, in short, the reason for this position is that from 2010 onwards the EA Northern Ireland became more engaged with the issue.

The reason why ‘WG-Agree’ features in the top 20 is because of one particular article. A web article published on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2017 by Amaris Cole, entitled ‘Belief and Unbelief – the Statistic Behind the Magazine’ mentioned the word ‘agreed’ 26 times. This is because the nature of the article was that it addressed a survey of 1,330 evangelical Christians on their opinions concerning belief and unbelief. The verb ‘agreed’ was mentioned in relation to what percentage agreed on a particular matter – for example, ‘92 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that preachers should have the right to express their beliefs about sin, judgement and hell even if people find these offensive’.<sup>412</sup> Therefore this word group need not be considered as crucial in relation to the discussion surrounding abortion; it merely displays the authenticity of the research itself.

Likewise, the reason ‘WG-Change’ appears within the top 20 is because of one particular article. A web article published on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014 by EA Northern Ireland, entitled ‘Briefing, the “Criminal law on abortion in Northern Ireland’, mentioned the word ‘change’ 14 times. This article was a briefing document entitled ‘Abortion in Northern Ireland Amendments to Justice (No.2) Bill February 2016 on fatal foetal abnormality, rape, incest and sexual crime’.<sup>413</sup> The term ‘change’ was mentioned in relation to asking the Department of Justice to change the law around ‘lethal foetal abnormality and sexual crime’.<sup>414</sup> As mentioned in the limitations, there is a discrepancy with this particular article. The article on the website is stated as being written on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014, whereas the article itself is in relation to a briefing in 2016. This error was only highlighted later in the result process; therefore, the article has remained with the 2014 date and does not affect any overall data.

Finally, as with the two key word groups above, the reason why ‘WG-Provider’ appears within the top 20 is because of one particular article. A web article published on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013 by EA Northern

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<sup>412</sup> Cole, Amaris, ‘Belief and unbelief – the statistics behind the magazine,’ *Evangelical Alliance U.K. website*, (03 January 2017, <http://www.eauk.org/idea/belief-and-unbelief-the-statistics-behind-the-magazine.cfm>).

<sup>413</sup> Evangelical Alliance (Northern Ireland), ‘Briefing, the “Criminal law on abortion in Northern Ireland,’ *Evangelical Alliance U.K. website*, (06 January 2017, <https://www.eauk.org/northern-ireland/briefings/index.cfm>).

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

Ireland, entitled 'Consultation Response', mentioned the words 'Provide', 'Provided' and 'Provider' a total of 12 times. This article was in relation to the provision of counselling services for those seeking abortions.<sup>415</sup>

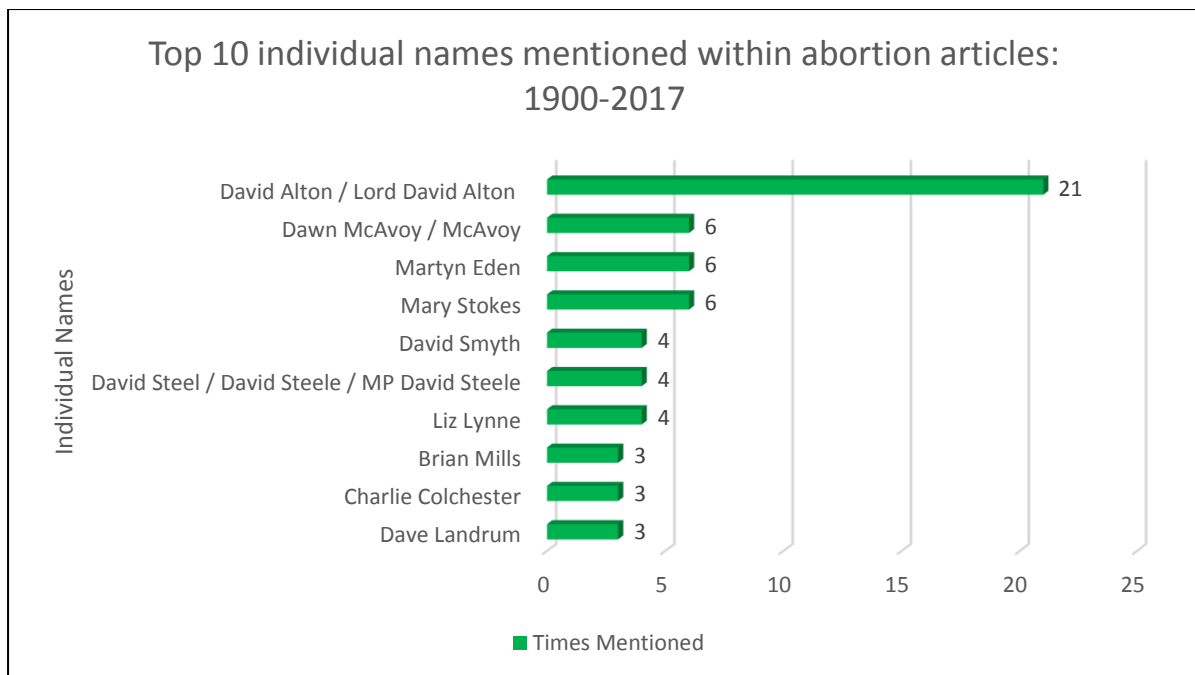
### *iii) Concluding Remarks*

In summary, the chart reveals, through the differing themes and terminologies, the amount of sources and disciplines discussed surrounding the topic of abortion, which, as Stott identified earlier, adds to the sheer complexity of the topic. Potentially, the standout observation is that, although within the top 20 word groups there is a considerable variety of differing sources, there is a notable absence of explicit theological terminology and themes, such as scriptural references or terminology such as sanctity, God, Jesus, or themes such as 'image of God' or 'sanctity of life'. The reason that non-appearances like this may seem strange is owing to the EA being an evangelical institution. As outlined in the earlier section regarding method, especially relating to scriptural priority, one may think there would be at least one theological aspect featured in the top 20 results. Potentially, from the outset, this could reveal a lack of theological engagement. The reason for this could also be that the EA has adopted a public engagement method that prioritises the discussion around secondary sources before engaging theologically.

## **2. Individual Names from Articles (1900–2017)**

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<sup>415</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'Abortion vote taken' *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, (07 September 2011, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/news/abortion-vote-taken.cfm>).



From the 46 articles containing the word 'abortion' or other derivative terms, the chart above demonstrates the top 10 individual names mentioned within the abortion articles. The reason for this chart is to identify the individuals associated with the abortion topic overall, according to the EA.

#### *i) Chart Observations*

The individual with the most occurrences, appearing 21 times, is David Alton. Lord David Alton is a former Liberal party and later Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament. He has been fighting preborn human rights issues in Parliament throughout his career. He is a self-professed Roman Catholic who has been appointed two Roman Catholic orders of chivalry; he is a Knight Commander of Merit of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George (2003) and a Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great (2008).

Two other members of Parliament are named within the top 10 results: David Steel (4) a former leader of the Liberal Democrats, most notably mentioned in relation to introducing the 1967 Abortion Act, and Liz Lynne, also a former Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament. Lynne was mentioned four times in one single article in a May 1996 edition of *Westminster Watch*, regarding forced abortion in China.<sup>416</sup>

Five of the names (Dawn McAvoy (6), Martyn Eden (6), David Smyth (4), Brian Mills (3) and Dave Landrum (3)) have been employed or, up to 2017, were currently employed by the EA.

<sup>416</sup> Carey, Andrew, 'Liz Lynne, MP,' *Evangelical Alliance*, Westminster Watch, May 24<sup>th</sup> 1996.

Dawn McAvoy is currently an administrator and researcher working out of EA Northern Ireland. She is also the head of the Both Lives Matter Campaign, of which EA Northern Ireland is the main funding partner. This may explain her position on the list. McAvoy also wrote two of the 46 articles found concerning the topic. Martyn Eden, who was appointed in 1990<sup>417</sup> to the EA Home Affairs department, was mentioned six times. Five of these six mentions come from one article (a news release) mentioning his appointment and his stated aim of 'encouraging Christians to relate their faith to a wider range of social and political issues'.<sup>418</sup> Eden then joined Premier Radio in 2009 and is currently its political editor. David Smyth is currently the head of public policy for EA Northern Ireland and wrote six of the articles concerning the topic of abortion, making him, according to the data collected, the person who has written the most on abortion in the EA's history. Brian Mills was the Prayer and Revival Secretary, mentioned three times in one press release by the EA on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1986. Finally, Dave Landrum is currently the Director of Advocacy, based at the EA in London.

Non-EA employees mentioned were Mary Stokes and Charlie Colchester. Stokes, from the charity Caring Professions Concern, now known as Christians in Professions Concern, is mentioned six times in one article, in an autumn 1987 edition of *Idea Magazine*, in relation to the 'unseen victims of modern sexual trends'.<sup>419</sup> Stokes, alongside Charlie Colchester, who in 1987 was the Chair of CARE Campaigns and mentioned 3 times,<sup>420</sup> could be classed as two activists mentioned within the top 10 names.

## ii) *Concluding Remarks*

One notable observation is that within the top 10 individual names mentioned, there is a lack of a notable 'prominent' evangelical theologian. Naturally, many on the list may well have a comprehensive theological education; however, they may not be primarily known as experts in this area. Therefore, the term 'prominent' is used in the sense of renown by evangelicals throughout the country, someone who has undertaken extensive theological education or taught theology as a profession. The reason that this omission may be of interest is that it may represent the overall lack of theological discussion surrounding the topic of abortion overall, highlighting the lack of theological discussion surrounding abortion for evangelicals more broadly.

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<sup>417</sup> Randall, *One*, 303.

<sup>418</sup> Ewing, Keith, 'Social Action Goal For New Home Affairs Secretary,' *Evangelical Alliance*, Press Release, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1990.

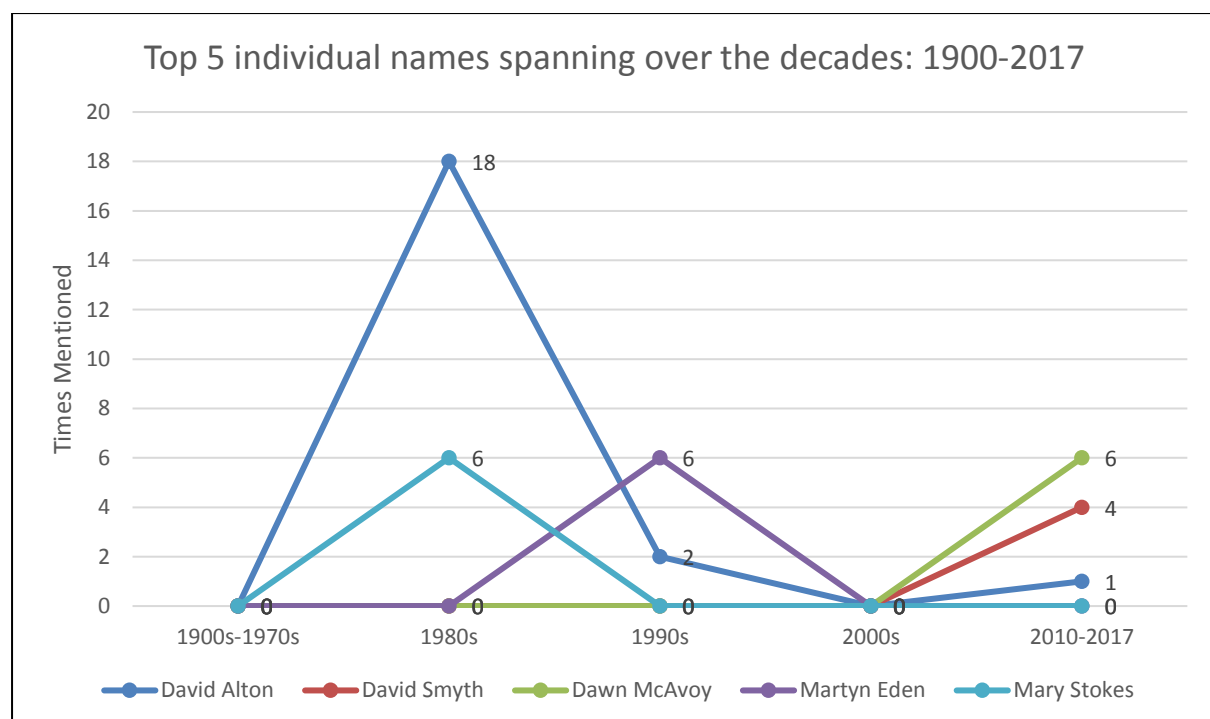
<sup>419</sup> Colchester, Charlie, 'Action On Sexuality,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Idea Magazine*, Autumn 1987.

<sup>420</sup> Colchester, Charlie, 'Roll back the Slaughter,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Idea Magazine*, Winter 1987.

A possible reason for this apparent lack could simply be that the aims of the articles were not primarily to inform theologically but rather to engage at a public policy level. However, one may even expect to see some well-known evangelical theologians mentioned. Some evangelical theologians could perhaps fit into that bracket, such as John Stott and Francis Schaeffer. However, they appear only once each in the EA articles.

The top 10 names are dominated by EA employees, MPs and ‘activists’, which demonstrates that the EA articles mention individuals from a vast array of disciplines when discussing abortion. Interestingly, the main individual mentioned by the EA concerning the issue of abortion has been not an evangelical Christian but a Roman Catholic: Lord David Alton. This demonstrates that the EA will join with non-evangelicals, cite non-evangelicals and be led by non-evangelicals on this issue. Likewise, this may indicate a trend within broader evangelicalism in the UK, resulting in the silence amongst the movement.

### 3. Top 5 Individual Names Spanning the Decades



The purpose of this chart is to take the top 5 names from the previous chart and demonstrate how consistently they have appeared across the decades, from 1900 to 2017.

#### i) Chart Observations



Lord David Alton is the only individual who spans four decades. In the 1980s his name appeared in two separate articles in relation to the topic of abortion, 17 times in an article in 1987<sup>421</sup> and once in an article in 1988. His name appeared again in two separate articles in the 1990s: once in 1992<sup>422</sup> and once in 1996.<sup>423</sup> Finally, his name appeared once more in an article in 2010.<sup>424</sup>

David Smyth's name appears in 3 separate articles in the 2010s: twice in an article in 2013<sup>425</sup> and once each in two articles in 2014.<sup>426</sup> Likewise, Dawn McAvoy appeared exclusively in the 2010s, up until the end of 2017 (this is the reason why 2017 is stated in the methodology). Her name is mentioned in two separate articles in 2017.<sup>427</sup>

Martyn Eden appeared exclusively in the 1990s. His name is mentioned in two separate articles, 5 times in one article in 1990<sup>428</sup> and once in an article in 1992.<sup>429</sup> Finally, Mary Stokes appeared exclusively in the 1980s. Her name appeared in only one article, 6 times, in 1987.<sup>430</sup>

## ii) Concluding Remarks

The chart above demonstrates two particular trends. The first is a distinct lack of consistent voices. Other than David Alton spanning four decades, the articles reveal that throughout the decades there has been a lack of consistent voices speaking and leading the discussion surrounding abortion. With each passing decade it is apparent that new voices enter the discussion. This is not always such a negative aspect, as new voices provide new perspectives. However, it could be said that there is also strength in consistency, as consistency brings experience. The second observation, as stated before, is that there has been a distinct lack of evangelical theologians, which means a lack of evangelical theological viewpoints on the topic of abortion. This is important as it provides an indication as to why there may be a silence more broadly within UK. evangelicalism.

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<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>422</sup> Ewing, Keith, 'Liberal Democrat's Abortion Decision, Deeply Regrettable,' *Evangelical Alliance*, Press Release, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1992.

<sup>423</sup> Carey, 'Liz,'

<sup>424</sup> Evangelical, 'Abortion Advert,'

<sup>425</sup> Smyth, David, 'The Value Of Life,' *Evangelical Alliance*, Idea Magazine, September/October 2013.

<sup>426</sup> Smyth, David, 'When will we see human dignity accorded to all babies before death?' *Evangelical Alliance U.K. website*, (24 April 2014, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/politics/when-will-we-see-human-dignity-accorded-to-all-babies-before-death.cfm>). & Evangelical, 'Briefing'.

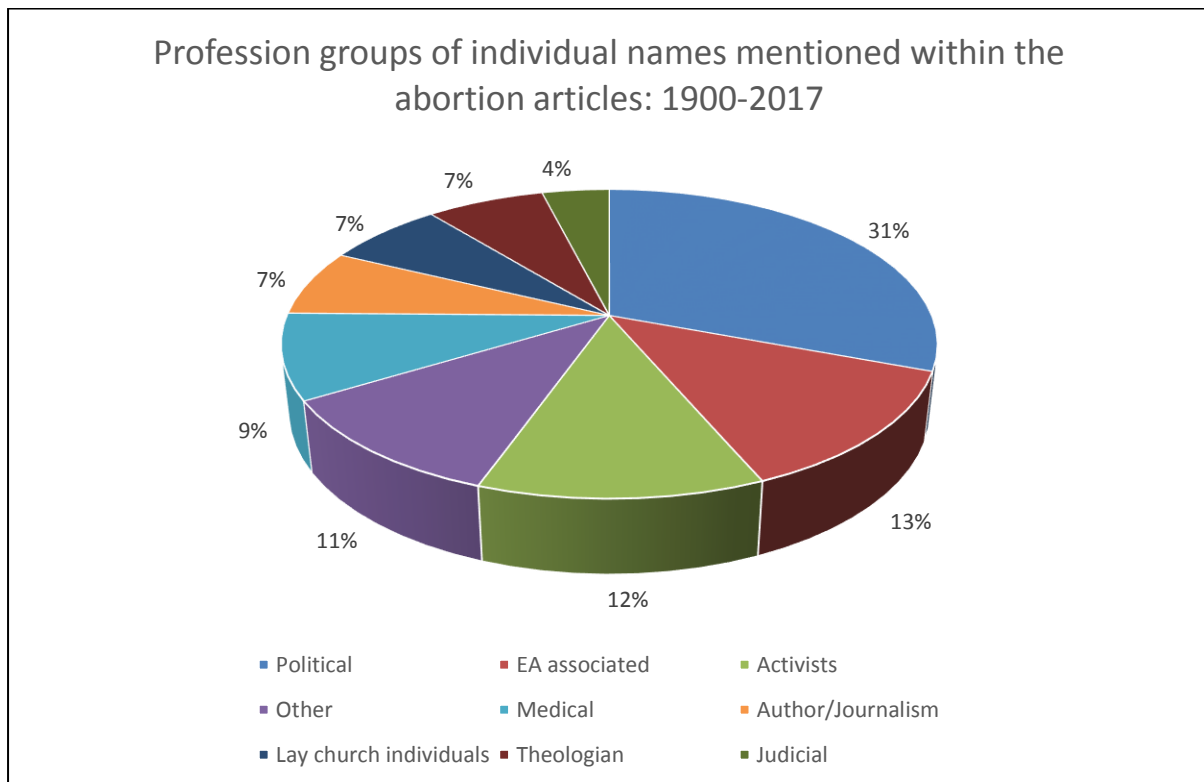
<sup>427</sup> McAvoy, Dawn, 'Pro-life advert found to be accurate by the ASA,' *Evangelical Alliance U.K. website*, (02 August 2017, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/media/press-releases/pro-life-advert-found-to-be-accurate-by-the-asa.cfm>) & Editor, '50 years and 100,000 Lives,' *Evangelical Alliance*, Idea Magazine, September/October 2017.

<sup>428</sup> Ewing, 'Social,'

<sup>429</sup> Ewing, 'Liberal,'

<sup>430</sup> Colchester, 'Action,'

#### 4. Individual Names (Profession Subgroup)



The aim of this pie chart is to discover the professions of the individuals who were mentioned within all the articles from 1900 to 2017. The purpose is to reveal the percentage of sources or authorities that shape the discussion surrounding abortion and therefore to offer an indication as to evangelicalism more broadly.

In the chart above, of the individual names identified from all the 46 articles, 75 were placed into one of 9 profession groups:

1. Political;
2. EA associated;
3. Activists;
4. Other;
5. Medical;
6. Author/Journalism;
7. Lay church individuals;
8. Theologian;
9. Judicial.

i) *Chart Observations*

The following is a breakdown of the individual names within the profession group and in brackets is the number of appearances.

1. Political – 31%

The following are individuals who have been categorised as working predominantly within the political sphere:

David Alton / Lord David Alton (21), David Steel / David Steele / MP David Steele (4), Liz Lynne (4), Anne Milton (2), Cathy Warwick (2), Dianne Abbott (2), Diana Johnson (2), Frank Field (2), Anna Lo (1), Ann Winterton (1), Basil McCrea (1), David Blunkett (1), Deputy John Langlois (1), Dr Evan Harris (1), Lord Braine (1), Lord Morrow (1), Lord Shinkwin's (1), Louise Mensch (1), Richard Ottaway (1), Robert Hughes (2), Trevor Lunn (1), William Waldegrave (1) and William Wilberforce (1).

2. EA associated – 13%

The following individuals are those who have been categorised as predominantly known as formerly employed or currently employed within the EA:

Martyn Eden (6), Dawn McAvoy / McAvoy (5), David Smyth (4), Brian Mills (3), Dave Landrum (3), Andrew Carey (1), Clive Calver (1), Danny Webster (1), Peter Lynas (1) and Michael Meadowcroft (1).

3. Activism – 12%

The following individuals are those have been categorised as working as activists, either pro-abortion or anti-abortion:

Mary Stokes – Caring Profession (6), Charlie Colchester – Chair of CARE Campaign (3), Ann Furedi – Chair of British Pregnancy Advisory Service (1), Jessica Woodroffe – Member of Christian Aid (2), Phillipa Taylor – Head of Public Policy at Christian Medical Fellowship (2), Catherine Francoise – Spokeswomen for SPUC (1), Helen West – Health Researcher (1), Lyndon Bowring – Chair of CARE Trust (1) and Paul Tully – Member of SPUC (1).

#### 4. Other – 11%

The following individuals have been categorised as ‘other’. The category includes individuals within a variety of professions, deemed too small for a category by themselves:

Luis Palau – Evangelist (1), Neil And Gillian Clark – Couple Cited as Paying for Abortion Treatment (1), Oliver Brustle – Cited as Selling Abortion Pills (1), President Harry S. Trueman (1), Professor Lynn Fraser – Fertility Expert from Kings College (1), Rupert Murdoch – Media Mogul (1), Siobhan Desmond – Mentioned in a Court Case (1) and Vikki Davis – Compassion UK (1).

#### 5. Medical – 9%

The following individuals are those who are in some way associated with the medical profession:

Dr P.M. Bloom (2), Dr Peter Liu (2), Dr Alan Rose (1), Dr Dan Poulter (1), Professor Etienne Baulieu (1), Steve Fouch (1) and Stewart Dickson (1).

#### 6. Author/Journalism – 7%

The following individuals are those who have mentioned as authors or journalists:

Andrew Brown (1), Minette Marrin (1), Michael Lichfield (1), Pamela Simms (1) and Susan Kentish (1).

#### 7. Ministerial – 7%

The following individuals are those who are predominantly known in a ministerial capacity or a member of a church:

Archbishop of York (1), Anglo-Catholic Bishop of Exeter (1), Cardinal Basil Hume (1), John Ogier (2) and Rev David Shosanya (1).

#### 8. Theologian – 7%

The following individuals are those who are predominantly known as theologians. They are 'prominent' in the sense that they have taught theology or authored specifically theological publications, as mentioned earlier:

Brian Wenham (1), David Watson (1), Dr. John Stott (1), Francis Schaeffer (1) and Richard Winter (1).

#### 9. Judicial – 4%

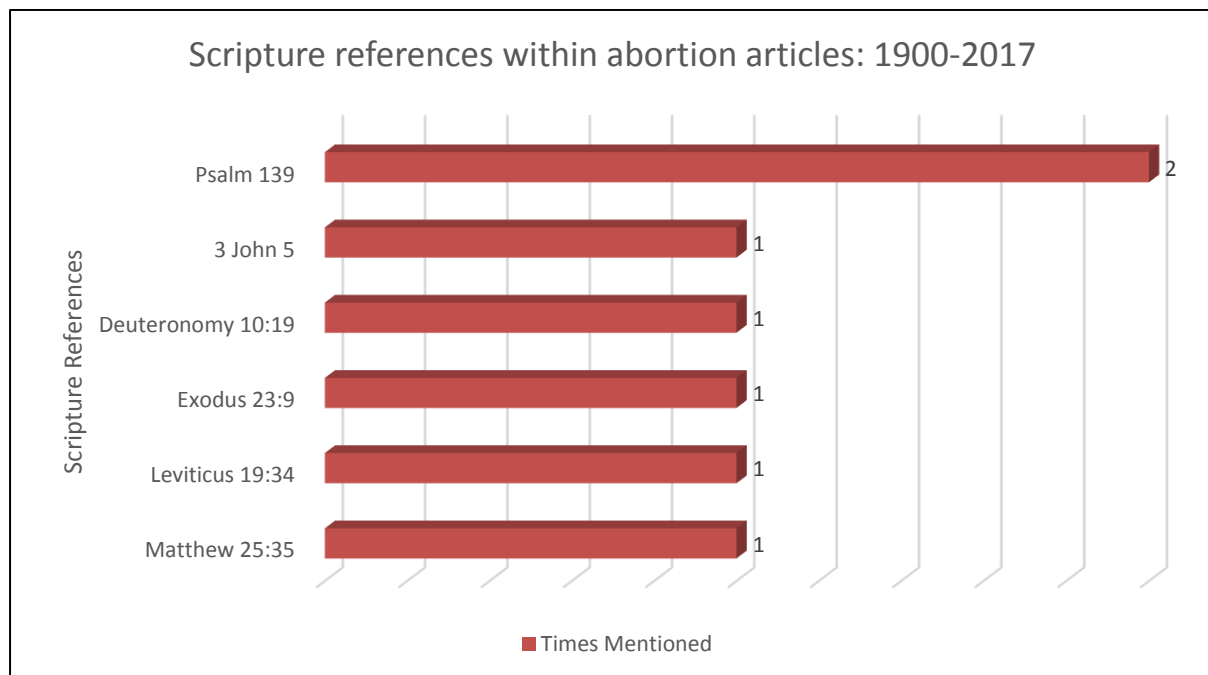
The following individuals are those who have been categorised as working within the judicial system:

George Crozier (1), Judge Horner (1) and Professor F LaGard Smith (1).

#### *ii) Concluding Remarks*

The chart reveals that, with regard to the topic of abortion, the EA's main conversational partners are those who have occupations within the political sphere. The chart also demonstrates the variety of sources that the topic engages: political, medical, judicial and theologian. This should not be much of a surprise considering the comments from Stott earlier. However, once again, the results reveal that as far as the articles are concerned, the EA particularly discussed abortion within the political sphere. Also in chapter 1, they asked they listed abortion as a political issue. Once again, relating to the theological engagement, if the percentage of theologians mentioned in the articles offers any insight, it potentially reveals that theological engagement itself lacks engagement.

## 5. Scriptural Engagement



The chart above demonstrates the number of scriptural references found within all 46 articles that mention abortion. This chart reveals to what extent Scripture has been used in relation to the discussion surrounding abortion. Within the 46 articles there were 7 scriptural references in total.

### i) Chart Observations

Psalm 139 appears once in two different articles in 2013, the first time in a web article entitled ‘One born every minute, one aborted every three: the progressive dream?’, written by David Smyth. The passage appears in the context of EA affirming that ‘we believe in the intrinsic sanctity of life, that God is the creator of life even from before the “unformed body” (Psalm 139) in the mother’s womb’.<sup>431</sup> The second, again authored by David Smyth in the September/October issue of *Idea Magazine*, noted:

‘Life and freedom to make choices are generous gifts from God. We believe in the intrinsic sanctity of life; that God is the creator of life even from before the “unformed body” (Psalm 139) in the mother’s womb’.<sup>432</sup>

3 John 5, Deuteronomy 10:19, Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:34 and Matthew 25:35 are all mentioned in one article: an article entitled ‘The Gospel of Reconciliation’ which appeared in the autumn 1983 edition of *Idea Magazine* in relation to the ‘exploitation’ of human beings in need. The references were not in direct reference to the issue of abortion:

<sup>431</sup> Smyth, David, ‘Protecting the unborn’ *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, (18 April 2013, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/politics/protecting-the-unborn.cfm>).

<sup>432</sup> Smyth, ‘Value,’

When we exploit or ignore fellow human beings in need, the Bible tells us we insult our Maker. Both Old and New Testaments express how God's people should love the migrant or alien in our midst (Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19; Matthew 25:35; 3 John 5).<sup>433</sup>

## *ii) Concluding Remarks*

The main standout observation, what is clearly evident, is the massive shortage of scriptural references within the abortion articles. Of a total of 4,595 different key terms identified, there is a total of 7 biblical references. Therefore, 0.15% of the key words cited are biblical references and 0.04% in relation to abortion specifically. Again, it is understandable that public policy papers may not contain scriptural verses, as they tend to engage with non-evangelicals. However, one may expect supporter magazines such as *Idea* or even web articles to engage with Scripture in some shape or form. This may be surprising, considering it is the Evangelical Alliance and that, for evangelicals, as demonstrated in the previous section, the Bible is the highest authority. The silence of Scripture within the abortion articles could lead to evangelicals more broadly presuming that the Bible is silent on the topic or has no capital within the discussion itself.

Also, concerning the 'intrinsic sanctity of life', in 2017, through its publication 'What Kind of Society' the EA was consistent with its position:

For Christians human life is sacred, and we have a duty to protect that life in all its forms, this means caring for the elderly, supporting people with health challenges and disabilities, and advocating for the protection of life before birth.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> Keay, Kathy, 'The Gospel of Reconciliation,' *Evangelical Alliance*, Idea Magazine, Autumn 1983.

<sup>434</sup> Evangelical, *What*, 8.

## 6. Abortion Mentioned by the Decade

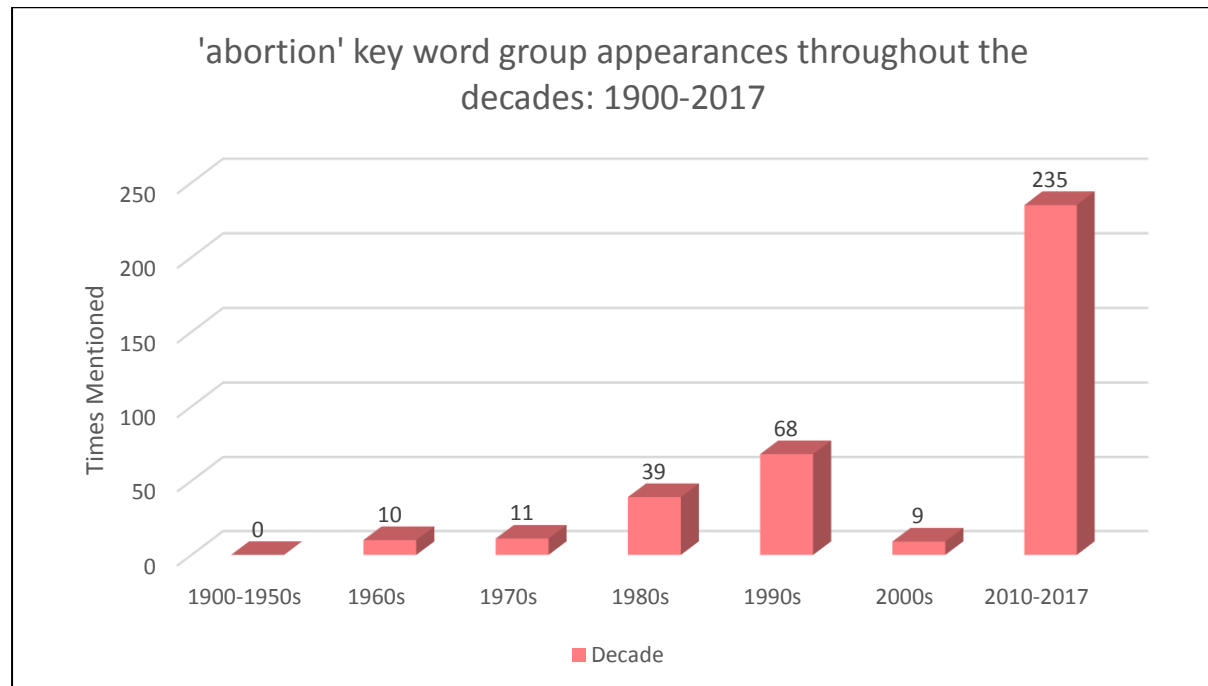


Chart 1 displayed the total number of appearances of the key word 'abortion' over the decades, from 1900 to 2017: 372 in total. The chart above breaks down those appearances into appearance by specific decade.

### i) Chart Observations

It can be observed that the key word group 'abortion' appeared 10 times in the 1960s. As far as was made available, no appearances of the word 'abortion' occurred before this point. The figure stabilised in the 1970s whereas in the 1980s and then the 1990s there was a proportionate increase. However, in the 2000s the appearance of the word group plummeted to its lowest point. Then from 2010 until 2017 there was a categorical increase in the appearance of the 'abortion' key word group. The main reason for this was engagement from the EA Northern Ireland, which will be covered in more detail in chart 12.

### ii) Concluding Remarks

In the following charts, each decade will be analysed more closely. However, with regard to the documents that were available there was no appearance of the word 'abortion' or any derivative until the 1960s. This may be surprising considering that Barbara Brookes, author of *Abortion In England: 1900–1967*, notes, 'by the mid-1930's the official silence on abortion had been broken and ... that the topic was now becoming respectable'.<sup>435</sup> In one sense it could be noted that the EA appeared more

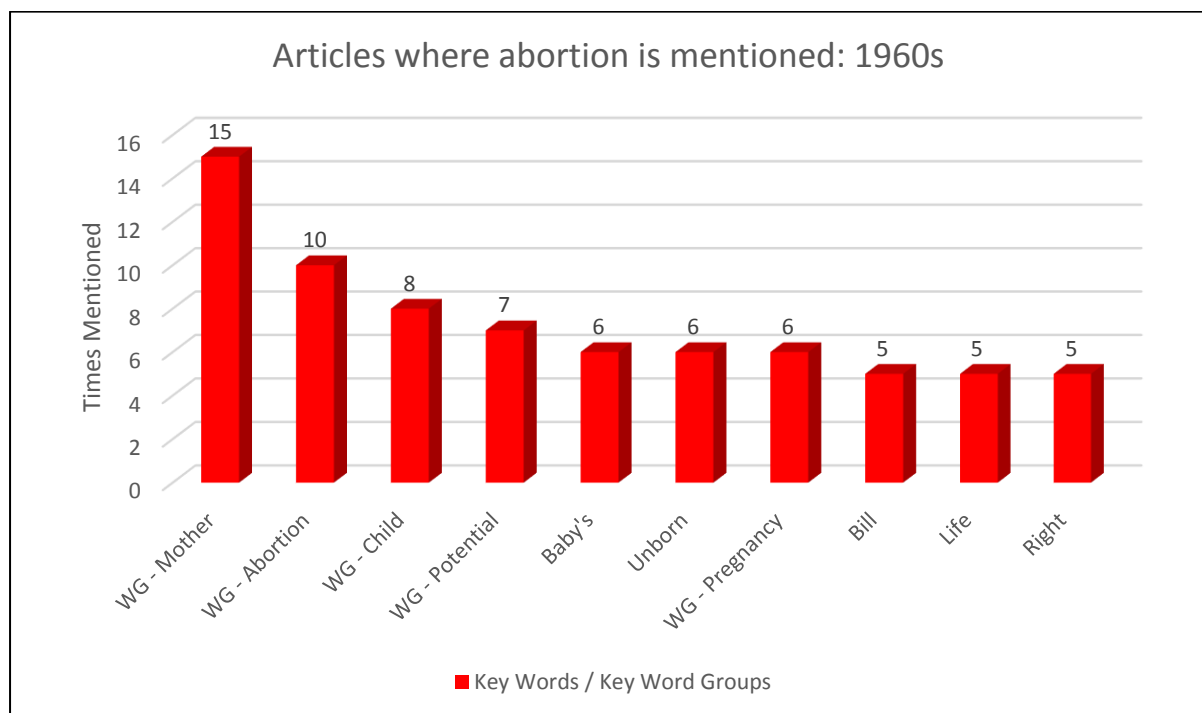
<sup>435</sup> Brookes, Barbara, *Abortion In England 1900-1967*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013. 93.



reactive than proactive concerning the issue of abortion as it only appeared on its radar in the decade when the 1967 Abortion Act was passed. In fact, as will be discussed in the next chart, the first article was released within the year the 1967 Abortion Act was passed.

One factor as to why abortion, along with social issues in general, may not have been a priority is that the EA was not exempt from the social engagement paralysis mentioned in the previous section. For example, as mentioned, eschatological perspectives particularly were cited as a hindrance towards social reform. Randall notes, ‘the rise of premillennialism within evangelical circles during the inter-war years blunted the edge of its social concern’.<sup>436</sup> This attitude was specifically reflected in a 1924 edition of *Evangelical Christendom*, when an article stated that ‘all international political reform was doomed because it was a denial of the imminence of the Second Coming’.<sup>437</sup>

## 7. 1960s Abortion Articles



The graph above demonstrates the top 10 results of the key word / key word groups identified from the articles where abortion was mentioned exclusively in the decade of the 1960s (1960–1969).

### i) Key Word Group Breakdowns

- Word group ‘WG-Mother’ contains the following words:  
Mother / Mother's Health

<sup>436</sup> Randall, *One*, 101.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*

- Word group 'WG-Abortion' contains the following words:  
Abortion / Abortion on Demand / Abortive / Back Street Abortions
- Word group 'WG-Child' contains the following words:  
Child / Children
- Word group 'WG-Potential' contains the following words:  
Potential / Potentiality
- Word group 'WG-Pregnancy' contains the following words:  
Pregnancy / Pregnant

ii) *Chart Observations*

As discussed in the chart above, of the 43 articles identified as containing the word 'abortion', only one article was found in the 1960s. Written in a January 1967 edition of *Crusade*, which by 1967 was circulating 21,000 copies,<sup>438</sup> the article entitled 'Abortion: Our Current Affairs Correspondent puts the present debate in perspective' was authored by Michael Meadowcroft. The article was written as Parliament was 'currently considering a Bill to reform the law on abortion'.<sup>439</sup> The article does not provide the name of the exact bill, although one could surmise it may have been Lord David Steel's private members' bill, also known as the 'The Abortion Act 1967, which was passed in October of that same year.

What is evident from the article is that Meadowcroft, writing on the behalf of the EA, appeared to favour a change in the law. However, as to how that looked, he had his reservations:

come what may, however, there is a need to change the existing law, which makes one law for the rich and one for the poor; and which leads to thousands of highly dangerous back street abortions. Public opinion is ready for a change. The question is, what sort of change?<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> Randall, *One*, 275.

<sup>439</sup> Meadowcroft, Michael, 'Abortion,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Crusade* 24, January 1967.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*

Earlier in the article, however, Meadowcroft appeared to have embraced the pro-abortion rhetoric of potentiality and pitting the mother's life against that of the unborn, as highlighted by the Bishop of Exeter:

Probably the best summary of the most reasonable and tenable attitude came from the anglo-catholic Bishop of Exeter when, in a debate in the House of Lords on an earlier Bill, he said that he regarded the unborn child as "not a member of the human race in the ordinary sense of those words", but as having a "potentiality of so becoming" ...But since the foetus has only this potentiality of humanity which is not yet fully real, because it is in the process of turning that which is potential into that which is real, the rights of the mother who has already passed from the potential to the real, and who is on any showing a full member of the human race, take precedence over those of her unborn baby.<sup>441</sup>

Meadowcroft concludes, 'thus we are led to the position where we accept that, other things being equal, the mother's claim outweighs that of the baby'.<sup>442</sup> This affirmation of Bishop of Exeter's perspective may have been a reason why there was a such a lack of engagement with the issue in the 1960s, even into the 1970s. By 2017 such a position most certainly would not be adopted by the EA. In *What Kind of Society?*, the EA claims that a 'coherent compassionate ethic requires protecting both women and unborn children as well as caring for them after birth'.<sup>443</sup>

Finally, as stated above, owing to the content within the article, the key word group at the top of the 10 key words listed is 'WG-Mother'. Again, owing to the content of the article, terminology such as 'potentiality' and 'rights' likewise features heavily.

## ii) *Concluding Remarks*

As discussed above, the fact that only one article was released by the EA on abortion in the 1960's and that the article in question appears to affirm that the change in the law could be responsible for the lack of discussion surrounding the topic in general. Barbara Brookes comments that the:

1960s saw an opening up of questions with regard sexuality, most significantly within the churches. The Roman Church was the only denomination to remain firm in its position against birth control and abortion, while the Church of England began to recommend more liberal views on homosexuality offenders, abortion and divorce. 153 One of the most radical reformers, the Bishop of Woolwich, John Robinson, argued in 1966 that the moral choice involved with abortion must rest with the woman, 'not with the doctor or a judge, or any third party'.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>443</sup> Evangelical, *What*, 8.

<sup>444</sup> Brookes, *Abortion*, 154.

This 'liberal view' found within the Church of England appears to have been somewhat influential on the EA's initial stance on the topic, as demonstrated by Meadowcroft citing the Bishop of Exeter's stance within the article itself.

Brookes adds that 'a number of important changes had taken place by the 1960s'.<sup>445</sup> She points out that:

The medical profession was secure in its status and no longer needed a restrictive law to oust its competitors. Secondly, fertility control was now regarded as completely acceptable and most desirable. Thirdly, the profession was facing demands from its clients, and to fulfil these, it had to shelter behind a façade of 'psychiatric indications'. A reformed abortion law, which protected medical freedom to decide on treatment, allowed the profession to meet the needs of its clients while maintaining ultimate control of the abortion decision.<sup>446</sup>

There could be many factors contributing to the EA's lack of engagement within the 1960s. Certainly there is evidence, as stated above, of embracing a position that favoured a law change. It could also be noted that in wider UK evangelicalism there were other events taking place. For example, Randall notes, 'the 1960s brought dramatic challenges to established norms, so evangelicalism in Britain was profoundly affected by the rise of the charismatic movement'.<sup>447</sup> Likewise, the rise of so-called 'Death of God' theology, of which Gilbert Kirby, the then president of the EA, 'admitted that evangelicals were out of step with much theological thinking'.<sup>448</sup>

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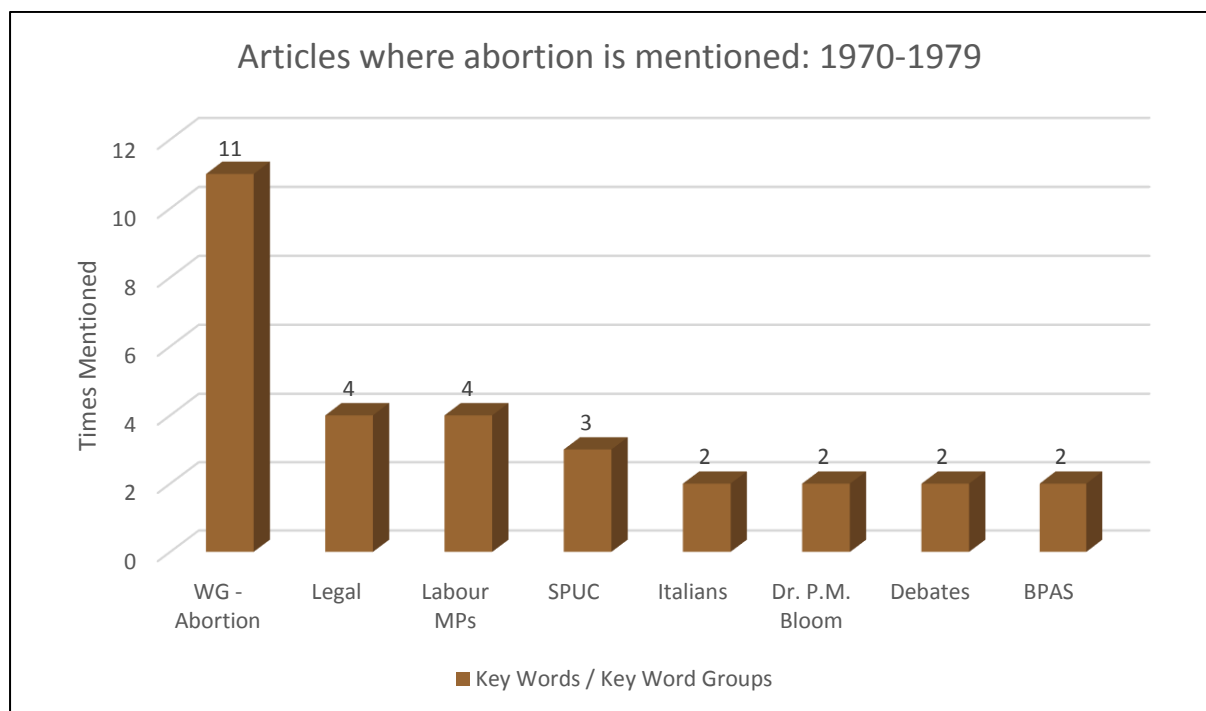
<sup>445</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>447</sup> Randall, *One*, 258.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid*, 269-270.

## 8. 1970s Abortion Articles (1970–1979)



This chart demonstrates the results of the key word / key word groups that were identified from the articles where abortion was mentioned exclusively in the decade of the 1970s (1970–1979).

Of the 43 articles identified containing the key word group ‘abortion’, 4 were written in the 1970s. The decision was made to only include the top 8 word groups because, after the mention of BPAS, the other words only have one mention each and would it be too numerous to list them all.

### ii) Key Word Group Breakdowns

- Word group ‘WG-Abortion’ contains the following words:  
Abortion / Abortion Act / Abortion Law / Legalise Abortion / Pro-Abortion Group

### ii) Chart Observations

In addition to the obvious appearance of the key word group ‘abortion’, the word *legal* appears four times in a 1978 *Crusade* article, entitled ‘Authors defend Babies for Burning’. The article related to legal action being taken against journalists Michael Lichfield and Susan Kentish who, in their book *Babies for Burning*, claimed that the Abortion Act was being ‘seriously abused’.<sup>449</sup> Dr P.M. Bloom won a case against them, hence his inclusion. The article does not state whether the two journalists

<sup>449</sup> Editor, ‘Authors Defend *Babies For Burning*,’ *Evangelical Alliance*, *Crusade* XLVI, Jan-June 1978 - March 1978.

involved were Christian. However, this appears to be the first indication of a critical stance aimed towards the Abortion Act affirmed by the EA just 11 years previous.

The term 'Labour MPs' appears four times in relation to a *Crusade* article in March 1979, entitled 'MPs' abortion quiz', where 'nearly 150 Labour MPs have been asked to make their current views on abortion public'.<sup>450</sup> Spearheaded by SPUC (Society for the Protection of Unborn Children), they saw 'this action as a precursor to the coming General Election, feeling that the electorate should be adequately informed about their MP's opinions on the subjects when it comes to the vote'.<sup>451</sup>

## ii) *Concluding Remarks*

This decade marks the arrival of pro-abortion charities (BPAS) and anti-abortion charities (SPUC) into the discussion. These two opposing charities took more precedence within the discussion surrounding abortion in the following decades. In spite of the marginal increase in the number of articles discussing the topic of abortion, the 'momentous Lausanne Congress of 1974', Randall notes, did 'much to re-establish socio-political action as an indispensable partner to personal conversion in the presentation and reception of the gospel'.<sup>452</sup> The effects of this were felt in the EA. Randall comments:

The period of the 1960s and 1970s was one that threw up considerable challenges for the Alliance. New movements brought fresh energy but also fresh tensions. Both in the area of spirituality and of evangelism there was a move away from traditional paths, a development that reflected the changing mood in society. As we have seen, the Alliance was open to renewal on several fronts: there was a willingness to go over to 'the other side'.<sup>453</sup>

One way the EA epitomised this new-found social awareness was with the establishment and growth of an EA department – the Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund, which would become known as TEAR Fund.<sup>454</sup> Randall notes, that under the leadership of George Hoffman, 'it became the best known evangelical agency in Britain engaged in global social action'.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> Editor, 'MP's Abortion Quiz,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Crusade*, March 1979.

<sup>451</sup> Editor, 'Author'.

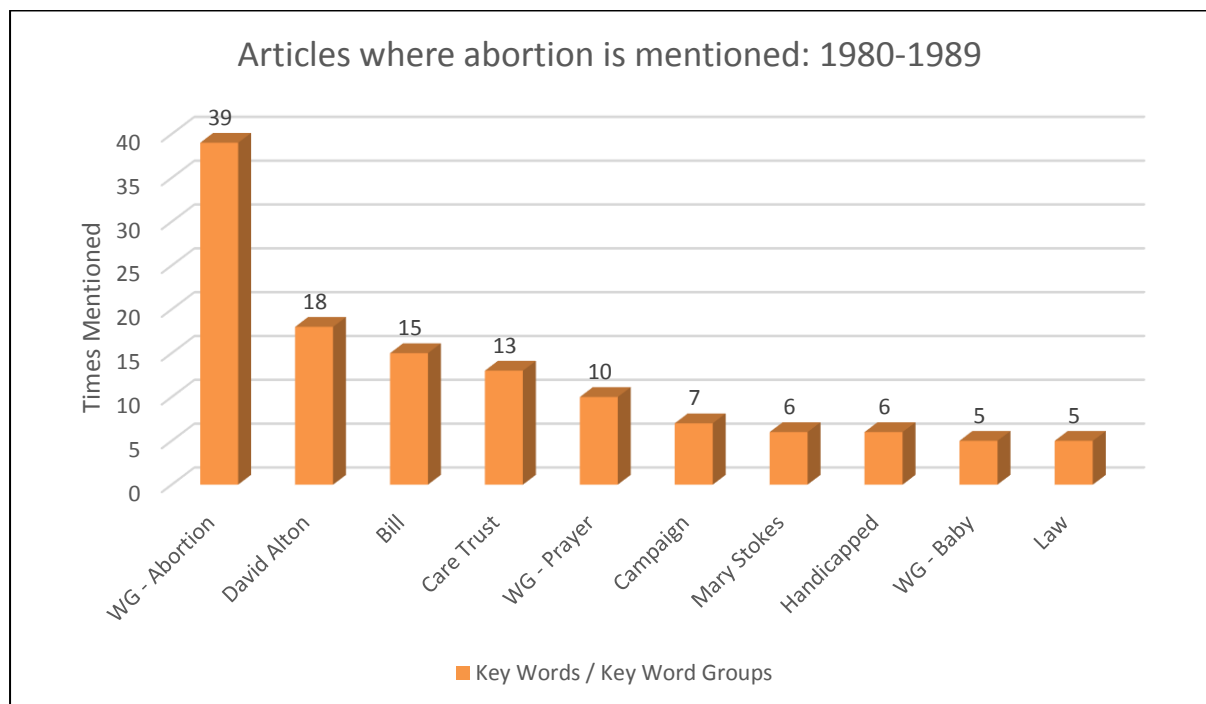
<sup>452</sup> Randall, *One*, 277.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid*, 282.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid*, 275-276.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid*.

## 9. 1980s Abortion Articles (1980–1989)



The chart above demonstrates the top 10 results of the key word / key word groups identified from the articles where abortion was mentioned exclusively in the decade of the 1980s (1980–1989). Of the 43 articles identified as containing the word ‘abortion’, 6 were written in the 1980s.

### i) Key Word Group Breakdowns

- Word group ‘WG-Abortion’ contains the following words:  
Abortion / John Corrie’s Abortion Amendment Act / Evils Of Abortion / Abortion Device / Back-Street Abortion
- Word group ‘WG-Prayer’ contains the following words:  
Prayer / Prayer Meetings / Praying / Pray
- Word group ‘WG-Baby’ contains the following words:  
Baby/Babies

### ii) Chart Observations

The first notable observation is that the appearance of the key word group ‘abortion’ has more than trebled since the previous decade. The second largest number of mentions is, in fact, an individual: Lord David Alton. Further details concerning Alton are found in charts 2 and 3. It is in an *Idea Magazine*

article, entitled 'Roll back the slaughter', that Alton's name appears 17 times. The article signals an 'urgent appeal' made by CARE Trust for British evangelicals 'to act in support of Liberal MP David Alton's attempt to change the abortion laws'.<sup>456</sup> Alton was bidding to 'reduce the upper age limit for abortion from 28 to 18 weeks. The article was urging EA members and others not to keep silent in the public debate over the bill'.<sup>457</sup> This explains the appearances of 'Bill', 'Care Trust' and 'Campaign' also in the chart.

The key word group 'WG-Prayer' appears 10 times. 3 of the 6 articles in the 1980s contained a reference to this word group. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 1986 a press release was sent out to the EA's members concerning an event called 'Pray for the Nation'. This event was attended by more than 7,000 people and its theme was 'moral and social concerns ... Children have been a focus with stark facts on abortion, child abuse and family break-ups helping to direct prayers'.<sup>458</sup> In the article 'Roll back the slaughter', prayer support was mentioned as one of the chief ways to help David Alton.<sup>459</sup> In addition, in a spring 1988 edition of *Idea Magazine* entitled 'Abortion Bill: Keep Praying', CARE Trust was 'urging Christians to pray for David Alton's abortion bill as it travels precariously towards a third reading in the House of Commons'.<sup>460</sup>

Another individual, Mary Stokes of Caring Professions Concern, appears 6 times in one small article in the autumn 1987 edition of *Idea Magazine*, entitled 'Unseen Victims'. Here she bears testimony of her experience with 'a 16 year-old girl patient who had recently undergone her fourth abortion'.<sup>461</sup> Stokes wanted to explain 'that an alternative does exist' and advocates the work of Caring Professions Concern.

The discussion surrounding the handicapped and abortion entered into the EA's discussion in the same article, 'Roll back the slaughter', under the subheading 'Handicapped Arguments'. Opponents against Alton's Bill were arguing that 'by making 18 weeks the cut off point for abortion, it will be more difficult to detect foetus abnormality in time for an abortion'.<sup>462</sup> Alton's response, cited in the article, was 'for six years before entering Parliament I taught handicapped and disabled children. Some were terminally ill. It would have been a brave man or women who would have announced them unfit to

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<sup>456</sup> Colchester, 'Roll,'

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>458</sup> Calver, Clive, 'News Release,' *Evangelical Alliance*, Press Release, 31<sup>st</sup> January 1986.

<sup>459</sup> Colchester, 'Roll,'

<sup>460</sup> Editor, 'Abortion Bill: Keep Praying,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Idea Magazine*, Spring 1988.

<sup>461</sup> Colchester, 'Action,'

<sup>462</sup> Colchester, 'Roll,'



live'.<sup>463</sup> Likewise, Charlie Colchester, of Care Campaign, asked in the article 'how can people talk about their right to kill a handicapped person? They don't have that right.'<sup>464</sup>

### iii) *Concluding Remarks*

It is evident that within the 1980s the EA became substantially more active with its involvement and rhetoric concerning the topic of abortion. For the first time, the EA called for fellow evangelicals to assist other anti-abortionists such as David Alton in the discussion. Also for the first time, spiritual capital enters into the discussion, with a large emphasis on prayer needed. This increase in engagement may reflect the fruit return of the evangelical social conscience planted in the previous decade.

This general concern for social activism is also symptomatic of the appointment of Clive Calver as President of the EA during this period. In the spring of 1983, *Idea* announced that Calver had been appointed General Secretary, and was one of the youngest men to hold the position in the Alliance's 137-year history.<sup>465</sup> Randall notes that Calver 'seemed to be a classic evangelical activist'<sup>466</sup> who insisted that 'increasing support of Christian action in society the Alliance was 'keeping faith with its past'.<sup>467</sup>

During the 1980s the EA would build strong alliances with both the Shaftsbury Society and TEAR Fund. This was crucial to raising the profile of social issues and likewise evangelical social activism during this period.<sup>468</sup> It was during this period that the EA started to become recognised and referenced as a credible resource to the media at large and also to political leaders in the UK.<sup>469</sup> Randal notes that 'journalists began to contract the Alliance for its views on a broad range of issues'.<sup>470</sup>

In summary, Calver's appointment enacted the renewed evangelical conscience that had been recovered through the help of Lausanne a decade earlier. His leadership was instrumental, as Randall highlights, in being able 'to motivate others and to encourage people and organisations to develop their full potential'.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>465</sup> Randall, *One*, 283.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid*, 285.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid*, 302.

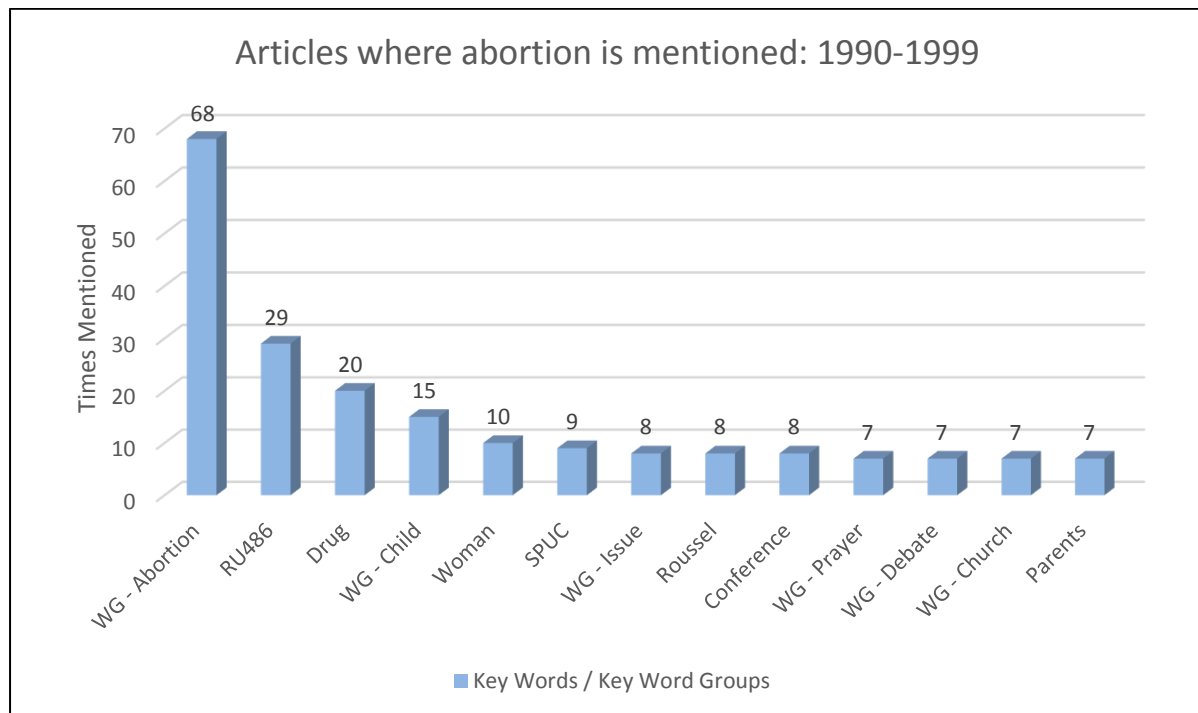
<sup>468</sup> *Ibid*, 287-288.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid*, 283.

## 10. 1990's Abortion Articles (1990-1999)



This chart demonstrates the top 13 results of the key word / key word groups identified from the articles where abortion was mentioned exclusively in the decade of the 1990s (1990–1999). The reason for the top 13 rather than the usual top 10 is because four key words have seven mentions each, therefore the decision was made to extend the chart. Of the 43 articles identified containing the key word group 'abortion', 11 were written in the 1990s.

### i) Key Word Group Breakdowns

- Word group 'WG-Abortion' contains the following words:  
Abortion / National Abortion Campaign / Abortofacients / Abortion Decision / Abortion Statistics / Abort / Abortion Law / Pro-Abortion / Abortion Bill / Backstreet Abortions / Abortion on Demand / Abortion Act / Limited 'Social' Abortion / Post-Abortion Syndrome / Post-Abortion
- Word group 'WG-Child' contains the following words:  
Child / Children
- Word group 'WG-Issue' contains the following words:  
Issue / Issues
- Word group 'WG-Prayer' contains the following words:

## Pray / Prayer

- Word group 'WG-Debate' contains the following words:

Debate / Debates

- Word group 'WG-Church' contains the following words:

Church / Churches / Churches

### ii) *Chart Observations*

The largest key word on the graph, next to the 'abortion' key word group, is RU486. RU486 is the abortion pill, also known as mifepristone. The pill was licensed for use in Britain on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1991. In a 1991 October/November *Idea Magazine* article, entitled 'Licence To Kill', the term 'RU486' appeared 29 times.<sup>472</sup> The EA condemned the drug as 'experienced pro-life campaigners CARE, together with SPUC and the Alliance delivered a letter to Hoescht's (Roussel's parent company) Frankfurt headquarters demanding the drug be kept out of Britain'.<sup>473</sup> The article urged action on behalf of evangelicals to partner with charities to see 'how you can get involved in praying and lobbying'.<sup>474</sup> This explains the position of 'Drug' on the list and 'Roussel', which was the company supplying the drug.

The appearance of 'Conference' on the graph is in relation to a *Westminster Watch* article written on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1994, entitled 'Cairo Summit achieves more than was expected'.<sup>475</sup> The event referenced was a United Nations conference on population and development. The article highlighted a dispute between Christian delegates, one called Jessica Woodroffe, who on behalf of Christian Aid noted that 'the contentious issue of abortion, which had dominated the entire meeting, had taken up too much time'.<sup>476</sup> She continued, 'the conference had achieved some important objectives – among them acknowledging of the importance of women's rights and education – but it had been hamstrung by the hard-fought debates on abortion'.<sup>477</sup> Alternatively, the anti-abortionist charities were happy with the outcome of the conference. Paul Tully, a delegate from SPUC, commented, 'Roman Catholic's had effectively stopped the population control activists in their tracks'.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Editor, 'License To Kill,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Idea Magazine*, October/November 1991.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>475</sup> Editor, 'Cairo Summit Achieves More Than Was Expected,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Westminster Watch* Number 20, September 23rd 1994.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>477</sup> Editor, 'Keep,'

<sup>478</sup> Editor, 'Cairo',

Once again, as was the case in the 1980's, prayer is mentioned in the top results. Also, for the first time, the key word group 'Church' appears in the top results. Four times the key word group appears in an article written in *Idea Magazine's* September/October 1997 edition, entitled 'Binding Up the Broken hearted'.<sup>479</sup> The article appears written to promote a CARE rally, noting, 'thirty years since the establishment of the Abortion Act, a Care for Life rally highlights the maturing of the Evangelical Church in the emotive area of abortion'.<sup>480</sup> The article states:

The Evangelical Church's response to the Abortion Act has been steady opposition. Evangelicals understand that God creates life at the moment of conception, and that the unborn child is tiny, vulnerable sacred to God and in need of protection.<sup>481</sup>

The article also states that the Church has likewise shown physical support: 'many evangelical churches have been involved in setting up Pregnancy Crisis Centres'.<sup>482</sup> The author was hopeful that 'the Church will contribute to a national reassessment of the issue'.<sup>483</sup>

### iii) Concluding Remarks

During the 1990s, as the results demonstrate, a clearer anti-abortion attitude not only appears from the EA but is also more broadly representative of evangelicals in the UK. With the introduction of the abortion pill, evangelicals and evangelical churches appeared to meet the challenge head on with prayer, rallies and setting up pregnancy counselling centres. As the results also demonstrate, the 1990s appear to have been an effective time for evangelical activism against the pro-abortion lobby.

One potential reason for this increase in activism is the fact that in 1990 the EA's investment in social affairs increased by strategically dividing the social and foreign affairs department. As Randall notes, 'it was recognised that the socio-political issues in Britain were complex and required expertise'.<sup>484</sup> It was in 1990 that The Movement for Christian Democracy was formed and, as Randall comments, 'David Alton MP, someone identified with issues such as abortion law reform commented on how it had introduced Catholics and evangelicals to each other'.<sup>485</sup>

Likewise in 1990 Martyn Eden, a former lecturer in politics and social administration, was appointed to head the Home Affairs Department. Randall notes:

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<sup>479</sup> Editor, 'Binding Up The Broken Hearted,' *Evangelical Alliance, Idea Magazine*, September/October 1997.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>484</sup> Randall, *One*, 302-303.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*

It was Eden's task to encourage Christians to become more involved with local as well as national issues. From his perspective, evangelicals were increasingly aware of issues like Sunday trading, abortion and embryo experimentation. He believed that the work in recent years of evangelical events and agencies such as Spring Harvest, the Jubilee Centre and CARE Trust had helped evangelicals to become more socially aware and active. His commitment was to widen that concern to issues such as homelessness, housing and education.<sup>486</sup>

In 1992, Fred Catherwood became president of the EA and, with this appointment, according to Randall, 'even more attention was given to social action'.<sup>487</sup> Catherwood left the role in 1997 to take up a new role as President of World Relief in the USA. Randall notes that Catherwood 'helped to change the face of British evangelicalism. The growth of the Alliance's membership and profile during his period in office had been unprecedented',<sup>488</sup> and he adds that 'there had been several richly gifted General Secretaries before him, but none had made a greater impact'.<sup>489</sup>

Change came again with the appointment of Joel Edwards as General Director in 1997. It was during this time, Randall notes, 'that the EA developed "Movement for Change" as a conscious attempt to recover the *raison d'être* and cultural influence of its nineteenth-century founders'.<sup>490</sup> In 1999, David Hilborn commented that:

the Directors of the Alliance undertook to address the social transformation agenda which might lie ahead for British Evangelicals in the new millennium. Aware of the significant changes wrought over the previous three decades or so by secularization, multiculturalism and pluralism, and conscious of the major civic and ecclesiastical realignments which had ensued, the Directors resolved to focus the Alliance on the task of encouraging Evangelicals to become a 'Movement for Change in the public life of the United Kingdom'.<sup>491</sup>

Edwards was at the forefront of this change declaring, 'We are united for a mission ... a mission to see a changed society'.<sup>492</sup> Hilborn adds that Joel Edwards 'has been a passionate advocate of the Movement for Change agenda from the beginning, and is its highest profile spokesperson'.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> *Ibid*, 303.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid*, 307-308.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid*.

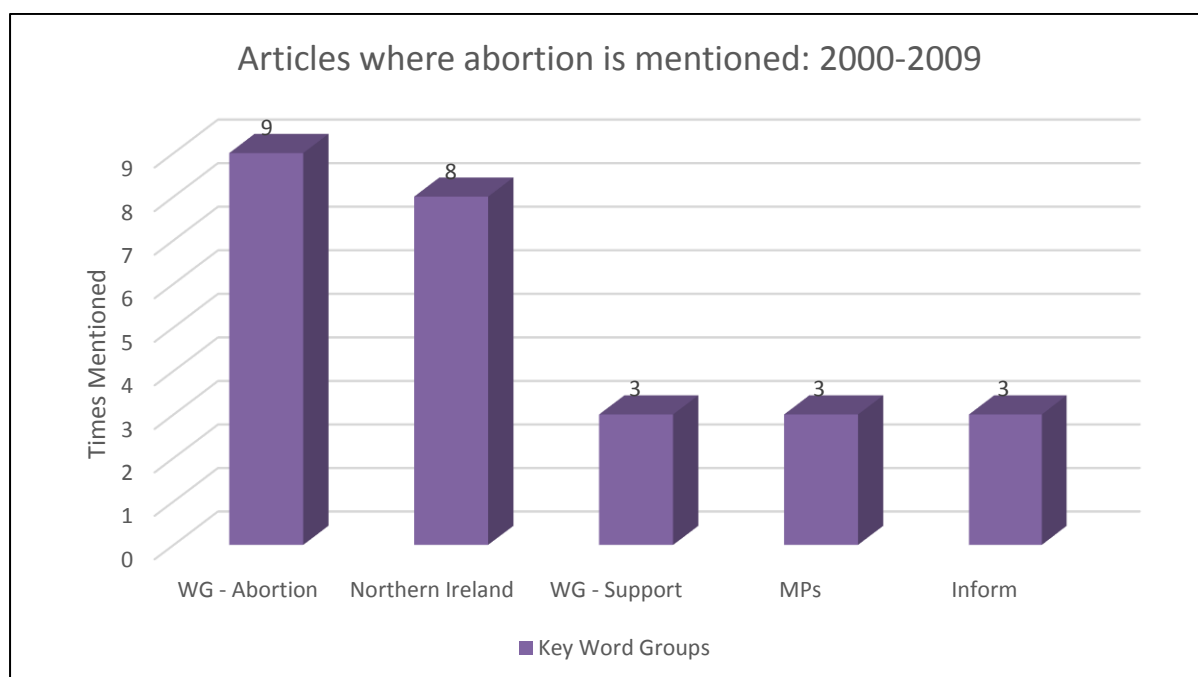
<sup>490</sup> *Ibid*, 354.

<sup>491</sup> Hilborn, David, 'Preface,' in David Hilborn (eds), *Movement for change: Evangelical Perspectives on Social Transformation*, Bucks: Paternoster, 2004, xii-xvii. xii.

<sup>492</sup> Randall, *One*, 355.

<sup>493</sup> Hilborn, 'Preface', xiv.

## 11. 2000s Abortion Articles (2000–2009)



The chart above demonstrates the top 5 results of the key word / key word groups that were identified from the articles where abortion was mentioned exclusively in the decade of the 2000s (2000–2009). The decision was made to only include the top 5 word groups because the next nine words / word groups were mentioned two times each. Of the 43 articles identified as containing the word ‘abortion’, 2 were written in the 2000s.

### *i) Key Word Group Breakdowns*

- Word group ‘WG-Abortion’ contains the following words:  
Abortion / Abortion Law / Past Abortions / Post-Abortion
- Word group ‘WG-Support’ contain the following words:  
Support / Supported

### *ii) Chart Observations*

The key word group abortion is only mentioned 9 times in this decade, the least in any decade. As there are only two articles in the 2000s, this enables more specific analysis of the articles themselves.

The first article was in a July/August 2007 edition of *Idea Magazine* in relation to the Frontline Centre in Wavertree, Liverpool. This church offered a post-abortion counselling service and crisis-pregnancy counselling, called Inform. Coordinator and health researcher Helen West explained, ‘we have seen

women who have been surprised by how much their abortion has impacted them ... Through the post-abortion counselling, Inform hopes to stop women suffering alone in silence.<sup>494</sup>

The second article related to the development of the issue in Northern Ireland, which explains why the key word 'Northern Ireland' is second on the list. Eight times 'Northern Ireland' is mentioned in a November/December 2008 edition of *Idea Magazine*, in an article entitled 'Your voice in Parliament'. The article states:

The debate on abortion provision in Northern Ireland re-opened this autumn as the TUC overwhelmingly supported a motion calling for the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland.<sup>495</sup>

The view was that the extension 'blatantly disregards the wishes of the four largest political parties in Northern Ireland'.<sup>496</sup> There was also pushback from 'the four leaders of the largest Christian denominations [who] locally also wrote to all MPs supporting the view of the political parties'.<sup>497</sup>

### iii) *Concluding Remarks*

The main observation from the chart is that, for some reason, after increasing mentions of the key word 'abortion' throughout the previous decades, this dramatically decrease to an all-time low. However, the chart demonstrates Northern Ireland's introduction into the discussion, adding a precursor to the following decade, as the EA discussion surrounding the abortion topic would come to be dominated by the Northern Irish context.

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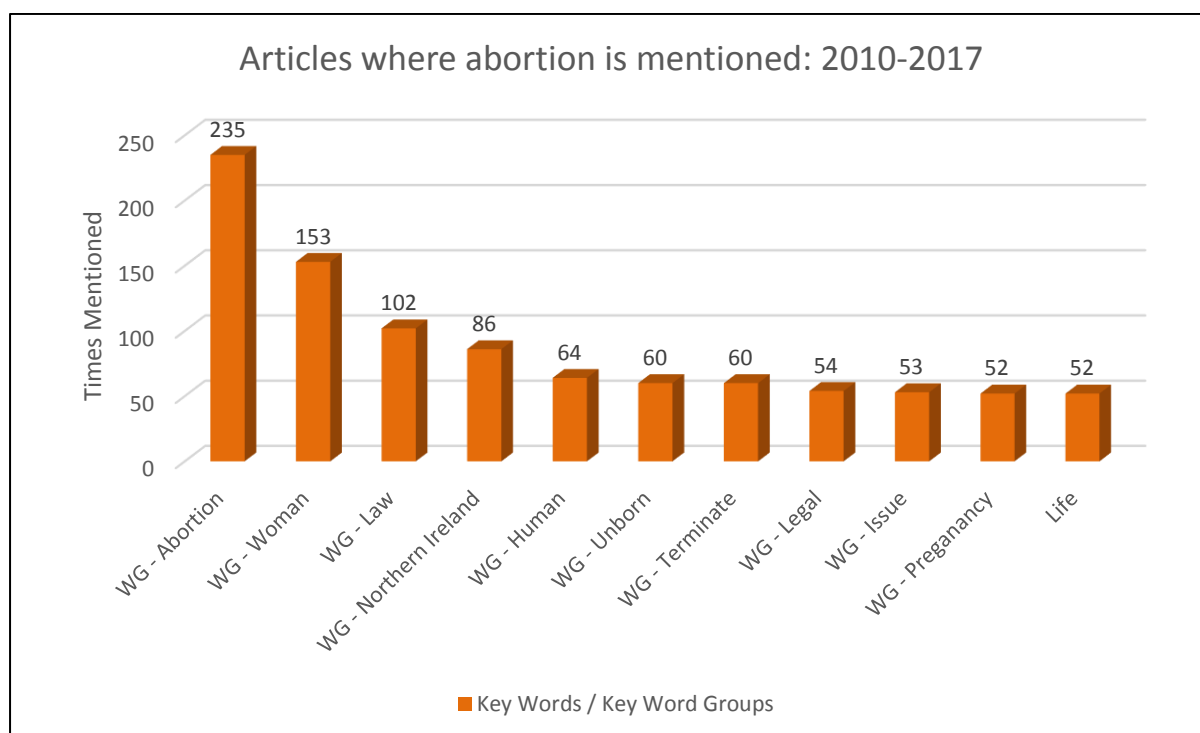
<sup>494</sup> Editor, 'Crisis Pregnancy Centre Opens,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Idea Magazine*, July/August 2007.

<sup>495</sup> Editor, 'Abortion Law,' *Evangelical Alliance*, *Idea Magazine*, November/December 2008.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*

## 12. 2010's Abortion Articles (2010-2017)



This graph demonstrates the top 11 results of the key word groups that were identified from the articles where abortion was mentioned exclusively from the period 2010–2017. Of the 43 articles identified containing the word ‘abortion’, 22 were written in the period 2010–2017. The decision was made to include the top 11 word groups as two key word groups both contained 52 mentions (WG-Pregnancy and Life).

### i) Key Word Group Breakdowns

- Word group ‘WG-Abortion’ contains the following words:  
Aborted / Abortificant Drugs / Aborting / Abortion / Abortion Bill / Abortion on Demand / Abortion Practices / Abortion Providers / Abortion Services / Abortions / Mass Abortions / Post Abortion / UK Government Figures For Abortion / National Abortion and Reproductive Rights League.
- Word group ‘WG-Woman’ contains the following words:  
Woman / Woman Consent / Womans / Woman’s Consent / Womans Life / Woman’s Life / Woman’s Mental Health / Woman’s Right / Women / Women In Crisis / Women’s Right / Womens Rights / Women’s Rights
- Word group ‘WG-Law’ contains the following words:



Law / Lawful / Lawful Termination / Lawful Terminations / Lawfully Permitted / Lawfulness / Laws

- Word group 'WG-Northern Ireland' contains the following words:  
NI / Northern Ireland / Northern Ireland's / Northern Irish
- Word group 'WG-Human' contains the following words:  
Human / Human Being / Human Dignity / Human Embryos / Human Experience / Human Laws / Human Life / Human Person / Humans Rights / Humanised / Humanity / Humans
- Word group 'WG-Unborn' contains the following words:  
Unborn / Unborn Baby / Unborn Child / Unborn Children
- Word group 'WG-Terminate' contains the following words:  
Terminate / Terminated / Termination / Terminations
- Word group 'WG-Legal' contains the following words:  
Legal / Legal Change / Legal Duty / Legal Issues / Legal Person / Legal Position / Legal Protection / Legal Reasons / Legal Safeguards / Legal Situation / Legal Tendencies / Legal Training / Legalise / Legalising / Legality / Legality Binding / Legally Binding Statutory Instrument / Legislate / Legislation.
- Word group 'WG-Issue' contains the following words:  
Issue / Issued / Issues
- Word group 'WG-Pregnancy' contain the following words:  
Pregnancy / Pregnancies / Pregnancy Crisis / Pregnancy Crisis Care / Pregnant / Pregnant Women

ii) *Chart Observations*

Owing to the increased number of times abortion is mentioned in the decade 2010–2017, it would be beneficial to identify and discuss the different context in which the topic features in EA articles during this time period. The topic appears in six specific contexts:

### 1. In Response to Pro-abortion Campaigning

The first article that appeared in the 2010s was a web article entitled 'Abortion advert causes controversy', written in relation to *Marie Stopes International's* advert on Channel 4 to promote its services. The article states that 'the ad provoked opposition from Christian and pro-life groups'.<sup>498</sup> The article included comments from Lord Alton, who represented the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group, calling for action from opponents in sending complaints to the Advertising Standards Agency.

### 2. Comments on Statistical Data

The key word group 'abortion' featured heavily amongst many other issues mentioned within statistical research carried out on social issues by the EA.<sup>499</sup> One comment on the statistics, from a web article released on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011, was in relation to the survey *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelicals* discussing the statement 'abortion can never be justified'. Steve Holmes commented:

The results to this question provide a complete spectrum of opinions. It is younger evangelicals who are more likely to think that abortion can never be justified, while older people are more likely to think that abortion, in some instances, is justifiable.<sup>500</sup>

However, specific comment was also made regarding abortion numbers worldwide, especially within the UK. For example, in a web article, released on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013, entitled 'Protecting the unborn', David Smyth comments:

These numbers are difficult to take in ... we can be a little dismissive about statistics, but sometimes the facts are just overwhelming – especially when you think about the man, woman and unborn child behind each one.<sup>501</sup>

### 3. Comments on the Practice of Abortion Providers

There was also comment in the articles on the practice at abortion centres. An article entitled 'When will we see human dignity accorded to all babies before death?' written by David Smyth on 24th April 2014, commented on the NHS admitting 'burning more than 15,000 fetal remains as "clinical waste" alongside rubbish while two others used the bodies in "waste-to-energy" plants which generate heat for hospitals'.<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'Abortion advert causes controversy' *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, (25 May 2010, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/news/abortion-ad.cfm>).

<sup>499</sup> Evangelical, '21<sup>st</sup>,' & Evangelical, 'Faith' & Cole, 'Belief,'.

<sup>500</sup> Evangelical, '21<sup>st</sup>,'

<sup>501</sup> Smyth, 'Protecting,'

<sup>502</sup> Smyth, 'When,'

There also appears to be a general understanding that the issue of abortion is a sensitive topic. However, Smyth condemned this practice as ‘graphic and shocking’.<sup>503</sup> The following comments highlight the rhetorical sensitivity adopted when discussing this particular circumstance:

This is not a pleasant story. It raises controversial and awkward questions. Abortion is not a popular issue for many Christians, let alone others and so I raise it sensitively. However I make no apologies for writing about something so crucial to our humanity, relationships, freedoms and justice. What is the Church doing across the UK today to offer hope and life?<sup>504</sup>

Smyth’s use of phrases such as ‘not pleasant’, ‘controversial’, ‘awkward’, ‘abortion is not popular among Christians’ and ‘sensitively’ suggests a sense of ‘taboo’ amongst evangelicals in regard to the issue.

#### 4. Comment’s on Independent Counselling

In September of 2011, two web articles were released to Parliament, seeking to ‘reject a bid to provide independent counselling for women considering an abortion’.<sup>505</sup> The EA’s Dave Landrum, commenting on the rejection, said, ‘It’s a pity this amendment did not get the support it deserved but the government have backed the principle of independent counselling.’<sup>506</sup> Landrum also notes the commercial benefits to abortion providers:

Abortion has become big business ... seen as just another form of contraception that has become a multi-million pound industry ... Counselling for women who find themselves in the difficult position of considering an abortion should be less pressurised and must ensure that the decision made is done in the light of all the information and options available. <sup>507</sup>... Any move that exposes and challenges this deadly consumer culture and lets women make a choice that is not guided by organisations intent on guaranteeing their income stream is an essential move in the right direction.<sup>509</sup>

Smyth adds that abortion ‘symbolises the ultimate consumerisation of humanity – offering the consumer the right to choose whether another human being lives or dies’.<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>505</sup> Evangelical, ‘Abortion Vote,’

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>507</sup> Evangelical Alliance, ‘MPs to debate abortion bill amendment’ *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, (5th September 2011, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/news/mps-to-debate-abortion-bill-amendment.cfm>).

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>510</sup> Smyth, David, ‘The who and where of abortion provision in Northern Ireland’ *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, (25 September 2014, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/politics/the-who-and-where-of-abortion-provision-in-northern-ireland.cfm>).

In July 2013 a 'Consultation Response' from the EA Northern Ireland was written in order to ensure that 'there must be independence and a separation between the provider of the termination and those who provide counselling'.<sup>511</sup>

## 5. Abortion in Northern Ireland

Demonstrated by its prominent position on the chart, Northern Ireland became heavily involved in the abortion discussion in this current century. A 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012 EA web article, entitled 'Abortion, Adoption and Anti-Slavery', written by David Smyth, highlighted the opening of a Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast.<sup>512</sup> According to Smyth, this 're-ignited' the question of abortion in Northern Ireland.<sup>513</sup> He concluded that 'we in no way wish to conflate these complicated issues but each one goes to the heart of our humanity, our freedom and how we treat the most vulnerable'.<sup>514</sup> Finally, he asked the readers to reflect on how to articulate their own Christian worldview into the discussion.<sup>515</sup>

In 2014, an amendment to the Justice Bill sought to change the law on abortion, specifically concerning lethal foetal abnormality and sexual crime.<sup>516</sup> This issue dominated the EA Northern Ireland engagement well into 2016, finally resulting in an in-depth 'Briefing' on the issue in 2016.<sup>517</sup>

Throughout the 2010s, the EA in Northern Ireland has been constantly on the frontline, not only representing evangelical engagement on the topic of abortion but also unapologetic in its position on speaking up for the unborn. For example, David Smyth expressed in a web article in 2014:

Abortion is a subject which comes up time and time again in Northern Ireland. We have written about the issue on many occasions and make no apologies for writing about it again. The way we respond to the silent plight of the unborn speaks loudly of the values we place on human dignity.<sup>518</sup>

The introduction of the Both Lives Matter campaign in January of 2017 sparked a new-found activism and strategy for the EA and its engagement with the topic of abortion. Both Lives Matter is a pro-life

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<sup>511</sup> Evangelical, 'Abortion,'

<sup>512</sup> Smyth, David, 'Abortion, Adoption and Anti-Slavery' *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, (25 May 2012, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/news/abortion-ad.cfm>).

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>516</sup> Smyth, 'The Who,' & Evangelical, 'Abortion Guidance,' & Smyth, 'Value,' & Evangelical, 'Abortion,'

<sup>517</sup> Evangelical, 'Briefing',

<sup>518</sup> Smyth, 'The Who,'

advocacy organisation founded by Dawn McAvoy, who is simultaneously an 'administrator and research' at EA Northern Ireland.<sup>519</sup>

Both Lives Matter began by making a huge statement with a billboard campaign which claimed that '100,000 people are alive today because of our laws on abortion'.<sup>520</sup> This was met with resistance. However, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) rejected complaints, stating that they 'carried out a thorough investigation, seeking expert statistical advice, which backed the claim made by Both Lives Matter'.<sup>521</sup> This result also featured in a September/October article in *Idea Magazine*.<sup>522</sup>

## 6. Abortion Decriminalisation

Finally, the EA has been firmly been against the calls from pro-abortionists to decriminalise abortion.<sup>523</sup> In one web article dated 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016, entitled 'One born every minute, one aborted every three: progressive dream?',<sup>524</sup> Dawn McAvoy wrote, 'Decriminalisation grants the unborn protection only in so far as it's the property of its mother',<sup>525</sup> and looks to evangelicals to not show any support for the campaign by signing their name to a petition in response.<sup>526</sup>

### iii) Concluding Remarks

According to the articles, this century marks the EA's greatest display of engagement with the issue of abortion in the organisation's history. Owing to the sheer volume of articles, the Northern Irish wing of the EA is overwhelmingly responsible for this increase in activity. The EA in Northern Ireland has responded not only with words but also with action, especially with the formation of the organisation Both Lives Matter. In addition, the visible increase of activity may result from other sources of media outputs, namely the internet. That said, the EA Northern Irish engagement may well simply be papering over the cracks, as it were, since there is a notable lack of discussion surrounding the issue elsewhere in the UK.

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<sup>519</sup> Evangelical, 'Who,'

<sup>520</sup> McAvoy, 'Pro-Life,'

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>522</sup> Editor, '50 Years,'

<sup>523</sup> McAvoy, 'One,' & Smyth, 'Doritos,' & Evangelical, 'Legalising,'

<sup>524</sup> McAvoy, Dawn, 'One born every minute, one aborted every three: the progressive dream?,' *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, (25 May 2016, <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/news/one-born-every-minutes-one-aborted-every-three.cfm>).

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*

What is noticeably evident, once again, is that discussion is predominately focused on engagement with the secular narrative, and there is limited scriptural engagement. Yet there is a glimmer of rhetoric that appears seeking to mobilise the UK evangelical church to action. David Smyth, in particular advocates for this: in a web article released on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014, entitled ‘When will we see human dignity accorded to all babies before death?’ Smyth writes:

Abortion is not a popular issue for many Christians, let alone others and so I raise it sensitively. However I make no apologies for writing about something so crucial to our humanity, relationships, freedoms and justice. What is the Church doing across the UK today to offer hope and life?<sup>527</sup>

Elsewhere, in an article entitled ‘Doritos, Cleft Lips and Trusting Women’, on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014 he writes:

Is abortion a largely ‘settled’ issue on the political and/or Church agenda in Great Britain? ... For the Church, yes abortion is a contentious issue but we need a strong and coherent, gracious and compassionate narrative which values and supports human life to flourish.<sup>528</sup>

#### **Concluding Comments on Chapter 4**

Although, as Randall notes, ‘the formation and development of the Evangelical Alliance has been remarkably little studied’,<sup>529</sup> the results from the empirical research revealed some interesting insights relating to the EAs engagement with the topic of abortion, thereby offering some insightful indicators for UK. evangelicalism more broadly.

The first conclusive point, as highlighted in chapters 2 and 3, is the diversity of sources accompanying discussion concerning abortion. This has been apparent, once again, throughout the EA’s engagement with the topic, since anthropological, judicial and medical sources are heavily mentioned in the EA articles, thus confirming the ‘complexity’ of the discussion overall.

Potentially, the most surprising result demonstrated throughout the results was the considerable lack of engagement with theological terminology and themes. This culminates in chart 5 with just five scriptural verses being mentioned within all the articles. This is surprising, given the privileged position of the primacy of Scripture in an evangelical theological method, as outlined in chapter 3. This would certainly warrant more of a scriptural engagement than is present. There may well be a

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<sup>527</sup> Smyth, ‘The Who,’

<sup>528</sup> Smyth, ‘Doritos,’

<sup>529</sup> Randall, *One*, vii.

significant reason for this omission, one not explicitly stated by the EA, namely, as a result of the way in which the EA has chosen to engage with social issues in general. That is, the EA's emphasis on discussing and informing evangelicals on the nature of specific social issues in relation to the issue within the public square occurs with little scriptural engagement. Consequently, in an increasing secular culture, society does not recognise Scripture as a valid authority. Therefore the EA may take a more apologetic strategy, although this conclusion is not explicitly clear from the articles themselves. That said, the EA may benefit evangelicalism more broadly by informing its members theologically, as this, demonstrated by the statistics in chapter 2, appears to be an issue with regard to abortion. This theological input could be needed, as Steve Clifford (Head of EA) has already mentioned that there are still 'those in our congregations who are unsure of what they believe, whether biblically or politically'.<sup>530</sup>

Another observation is the consistent lack of notable evangelical leaders mentioned within the articles. This is interesting, considering the importance of leadership in shaping the evangelical social conscience as demonstrated in chapter 2, Stott's call for strong leadership in chapter 3 and finally the leadership demonstrated in the EA's own history by Calver and Catherwood to name only a couple. According to the research it would be fair to conclude that either there is still apparently no clear single evangelical leader in the UK concerning this issue or that, to date, the EA does not appear to be aware of or know one. Again, to reiterate, this may be worrying, considering the importance of strong leadership in reforming social issues.

The EA's engagement with the topic, despite a decrease in the 2000s, is increasing. The organisation did appear to suffer from the social paralysis engagement identified in cChapter 1, especially relating to this topic. However, it has done much to amend this lack of activity, with the future looking encouraging, demonstrated by the surge of activity in this decade, culminating with the founding of the Both Lives Matter campaign. This is certainly a step in the right direction, with the EA showing a clearer intention to engage with the topic head on in the public square. However, one would also like to see the EA assist in more dialogue with the topic at a local church level. Finally, Randall comments that the EA has 'always been at its best when actively in the world, as a movement for change'.<sup>531</sup> One hopes this will continue to be the case within the topic of abortion.

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<sup>530</sup> Evangelical Alliance, 'Does belief touch society,' *Evangelical Alliance U.K.* website, (5 November 2011, <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/does-belief-touch-society.cfm>).

<sup>531</sup> Randall, *One*, xi-xii.

Finally, as discussed more in depth at the beginning of the chapter, when analysing the findings one must also be cautious of the research limitations. These limitations must be factored into account when weighing up the conclusions offered. These statistics offer only an indication of the silence and from one single perspective, namely the EA. Potentially they could offer a misleading perspective which may in fact not represent UK evangelicalism more broadly. Therefore, until further research is undertaken and the findings supported one must bear this in mind.



## **Thesis Concluding Remarks**

Chapter 2 demonstrated that, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, contemporary evangelicalism in the UK has experienced healthy growth; it also demonstrated that contemporary evangelicalism continues to be an effective movement when engaging many social reform issues. However, this effectiveness did not happen in a vacuum; there were prior consequences that preceded this fruitful evangelical activism. One main consequence, demonstrated throughout the thesis, is the role of strong leadership as a prerequisite for effective social change. This pattern can be seen throughout UK evangelical history, as demonstrated in chapter 1. One notable example is the case of William Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this was further demonstrated in chapter 2 with the conferences at Keele and Lausanne, at which John Stott was pivotal, and likewise in chapter 4 in the history of the EA with the appointments of the likes of Calver and Catherwood.

Yet in spite of contemporary evangelicals being socially active and the benefits of strong leadership, the research indicates that both these aspects are lacking with regard to the topic of abortion. Within the research there appears to be no clear and consistent individual evangelical leader speaking out on the topic. However, this does not necessarily mean that there are no UK evangelicals speaking out on the issue. For example, one could suggest Dr. John Wyatt and Dr. Peter Saunders, as well as others, who have spoken out consistently on the issue. Yet, for reasons unknown Wyatt does not appear in any of the EA articles available and Saunders appears only once.

Furthermore, this lack of leadership with regards to the issue of abortion appears to have filtered down to the local church also. In 2011, the issue as a topic of social importance was low on the agenda for local evangelical church leaders, despite calls in 1984 from Stott for it to be at the very top! A reason why local leaders may not be speaking out on the issue is that they themselves are unsure what they believe, reflected by the non-consensus position among evangelicals overall in the 2011 EA research.

## **Recommendations**

With regards to how UK evangelicalism could engage the apparent lack of silence on the issue of abortion, I offer two primary recommendations. In order to combat the apparent silence among leaders and laity, the first recommendation would be an educational campaign with the specific focus on addressing the issue at a local evangelical church level. The second recommendation would be for further statistical and qualitative research to be undertaken aiming to discover potential root causes which may also result in creating a silence within UK evangelicalism.

### *1. An Intentional Educational Campaign at a Local Evangelical Church Level*

Given the lack of discussion amongst church leaders on the issue of abortion, one potential cause of the silence may be the fear of how 'complex' the issue seems to appear, maybe resulting in leaders avoiding the issue altogether. However, as demonstrated in chapter 3, one way that this fear may be rectified could be by adopting a clear evangelical theological method when engaging the issue. The 'contemporary Christian debate' within chapter 3 was extremely insightful in identifying this very tension. During this discussion it appears that it was the hierarchal ordering of differing authoritative sources that created the confusion and thereby the complexity. Therefore, a starting point for contemporary evangelicalism in approaches to the issue of abortion maybe first a discussion regarding a clear evangelical method. However, this may be easier said than done considering the evangelical demonstrated at the beginning of chapter 3.

Another concluding point is the fact that the discussion appears to be predominated in relation to the public square. This was evident throughout the results from the empirical research in chapter 4. The response to Stott's call in 1984 for evangelicals to accept responsibility for a tighter abortion policy, is continuing to be answered within campaigning exploits by various evangelical parachurch groups and charities. Stott's second request, to provide and support a positive education campaign in the public square, also appears to have been answered. One clear example from the EA is the Both Lives Matter campaign, which seeks to fulfil this very mandate.

However, given that contemporary evangelicals are generally not united in their collective perspective on abortion, and owing to the lack of theological terminology and themes highlighted by the empirical research in chapter 4, the question and recommendation is a basic but essential one: to what extent would the local evangelical church in the UK benefit from its own educational campaign on the subject of abortion? Here, prior discussion surrounding evangelical theological and ethical method could be addressed in order to clarify some of the complexities and to bring some order into the confusion that hinders leaders and lay from arriving at clear positions on the issue. Without such action, we can only expect further increase in the silence from within and by the UK evangelical constituency overall. As discussed at the beginning of the section, strong evangelical leadership is a prerequisite to evangelical activism: perhaps through effective teaching at the grass-roots level, a new and baptised imagination will be grown, out of which can emerge new leaders who could fuel activism at a local level and by God's grace raise up leaders for the future who are skilled to take up the baton. Until then, the chasm between evangelical para-church organisations and charities in the public square and the local evangelical church on the other could drift wider and wider apart. , resulting in a silence that will have

catastrophic repercussions for the fate of millions of unborn children in the nation we aim to reach with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*ii) Further Statistical and Qualitative Research*

Finally, due to the limitations of the research, as already highlighted, many of conclusions drawn from the statistics may appear too hypothetical. However, these remain the only statistics available to date concerning the issue of abortion and evangelicalism in the UK (as of December 2017). My plea and prayer for the future is that more statistical research, as soon as possible, would be undertaken. This I believe would shed further light on to more specific causes of the silence amongst evangelicals in the UK. Therefore, with the correct findings this would fuel more effective engagement. Likewise, further qualitative research, such as interviews with key figures within the UK evangelical world could also prove invaluable with regards to engaging the issue. The prospective interviewees could include leaders of well recognised UK evangelical movements; whether that be Churches, head of denominations, leaders of conferences such as Spring Harvest and Keswick Convention and with faculty leaders of evangelical training colleges such as London School of Theology, Moorlands or Spurgeons College.

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